

# **Ethnic Media Technologies enhance Chinese English as Second Language Learners' Intercultural Identities <sup>1</sup>**

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## **Abstract**

In a predominantly English speaking society, newcomers are large consumers of ethnic media technologies. This paper, from a pilot mixed methods project, explores the effects of ethnic media technologies in the development of intercultural identity among Chinese ESL (English as Second Language) learners.

Twelve Chinese, who graduated from ESL programs in the United States of America, responded to a questionnaire relating to the topic of inquiry. A third part of participants was interviewed. Research data indicated that participants habitually spend an average of 6.04 hours per day using ethnic media in their daily lives, partly because they are still striving for maintaining their cultural ties in a predominantly subtractive bilingual setting.

Findings highlighted not only how ethnic media technologies play an important role informing new immigrant minorities' cross-cultural values when establishing group kinship within the host culture, but also how participants use ethnic media technologies to enhance integrative awareness, coherent bicultural identity, and cultural competence.

Recommendations for one-way and two-ways dual language classroom teachers are framed from cross-cultural adaptation and community of practice approaches.

## **Introduction**

The use of ethnic media technologies constitutes a natural bridge toward the development of intercultural identity for people who are immersed in cross-cultural adaptation processes. In fact, ethnic media technologies have grown dramatically in the United States of America. According to a New America media report, the numbers of African Americans, Hispanics and Asian Americans using ethnic media technologies on a regular basis increased approximately 16 percent, zooming from 49 million to 57 million adults over the past four years (New America Media 2009). The media outlets mostly used by the above three ethnic groups included ethnic television (TV), radio, newspapers and websites. In fact, minorities in the United States are consciously or unconsciously influenced by ethnic media technologies in their daily lives (Tisdell and Thompson 2007). With the advancement of ethnic media, they learn something about themselves as well as others (Lam 2006; Reece & Palmgreen 2000; Tisdell and Thompson 2007).

Research on the role of ethnic media in minority students' learning (Chen, Haufler and Taam 1999; Heintz-Knowles, Chen, Miller and Haufler 2000; Kim 1979) suggest that ethnic media plays a crucial role in portraying characters of diverse racial, ethnical, and linguistic backgrounds. In other words, ethnic media also functions as an important tool for developing minorities' self-perception and

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knowledge of others' cultural identities within the mainstream society (Neuendorf 1982; Rivadeneyra, Ward and Gordon 2007). Thus, it is important to pay attention to its effect on minorities' intercultural identity development in a predominantly monolingual-monocultural society.

So far, research on new immigrant cultural identity development has mainly focused on minority youth keeping an absolute silence on adults. However, recent studies (Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; Mastro, Behm-Morawitz and Kopacz 2008) on media and ethnical/cultural studies mostly emphasize minority portrayals in media in general, especially TV. Adults have been under-represented and negatively stereotyped (Chen, Haufler and Taam 1999; Mastro and Behm-Morawitz 2005; Mastro and Greenberg 2000). For example, Mastro and Behm-Morawitz (2005) examined the frequency and quality of Latinos' portrayals of the 2002 primetime television programs. Results showed that Latinos were much under-represented compared to whites and blacks. Also, Latinos' characteristics were portrayed less favorable than the above groups.

In addition, some scholars (Entman and Rojecki 2000; Lubbers and Scheepers 2000; Rada 2000) have claimed the existence of a direct relationship between the mainstream media portrayals of minorities and subsequent behavioral responses toward minorities. Generally speaking, minorities spend more time using mainstream media technologies than white using ethnic ones (Fujioka 2005). Among them, adults represent a large number of ethnic media consumers.

This paper discusses data from a pilot research project conducted in 2009. The study analyzed participants' preferences for media outlets, the amount of time they spend using Chinese media and the media usage motives. Therefore, the main topic of inquiry consists of informing not only MEXTESOL Journal readers, but also teachers involved in dual-language and adult English as second language (ESL) education on the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development in a predominantly English speaking society through exploration of the following research questions: a) What are foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' perceptions toward the use of ethnic media?, and b) how do ethnic media influence foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' bicultural identity development?

Certainly, the answers to the aforementioned questions, reported in this article, will evoke professional awareness, spark interest, stimulate thoughts and discussions, and disseminate knowledge needed to effectively teach K-12, college and adult ESL learners in a predominantly subtractive bilingual setting such as Mexico. To help our readers better understand the structure of this article, first we will provide an overview of some research related to the topic of inquiry before describing our research methods. Afterwards, we will present the research findings, implications and recommendations for teachers, bearing in mind that the terms dominant - majority - mainstream and ethnic media technologies - ethnic media are respectively used interchangeably in this paper.

## **Notion of Ethnic Media and Cultural Identities**

Ethnic media technologies have been acknowledged as mass media communications including traditional TV, newspapers, magazines and advertisements, digital radio, TV, and newspapers, and the Internet, etc. Forms of ethnic media are written and broadcast in the native language of a racial/ethnic group (Faber, O'Guinn and Meyer 1986; Lekgoathi 2009). That is, ethnic media are tied to a particular group and have the capacity to deliver information to that group. For this research, we purposely limit forms of ethnic media to traditional and digital TV, newspapers, the Internet, and music targeting Chinese immigrant minorities.

In fact, history of ethnic media (Ballinger and Kim 1996; Johnson 2000; Keshishian 2000; Kim 1979; Moon and Park 2007; Viswanath and Arora 2000; Zhou and Cai 2002) reveals that it can be divided into three distinct phases: assimilation, acculturation and pluralism.

The first phase (assimilation) took place in the 1920s and consisted of promoting cultural assimilation under the American melting-pot and whiteness approaches. Assimilation involved the rejection of the minority culture and strived for a complete integration into the mainstream culture (Neuendorf 1982). In light of mass media, early immigrant newspapers contained only a great deal of advertising and were sent to intended customers (Johnson 2000). Eventually, social science and media researchers began to focus on participation in mainstream media which was a need for acculturation. In the 1960s, immigrants' assimilation process was moved to the second phase: Acculturation.

Acculturation refers to the process in which minorities adapt to the mainstream society (Kim 2001; Kim, Lujan and Dixon 1998). Acculturation is an ongoing and interactive process which involves inter and intra personal communication with the mainstream culture. In this communication - acculturation process, mass media function as information providers regarding the dominant cultural environment and a buffer from the assimilation forces of the dominant culture (Johnson 2000). Also, the aforementioned scholar argued that media can help ethnic minorities reduce pressures in the process of acculturation.

However, this assumption was further challenged by some researchers (Kim 1996; 2001; Kim, Lujan and Dixon 1998) who addressed two postulates which may limit media communication in its acculturation function. Claims have been made that immigrant minorities who learn the mainstream culture from media may react or behave in different ways (Kim 1979, Moon and Park 2007). That is, media may not control media users' cultural practices. Also, newcomers may not have communication competence to develop interpersonal relationships with people within the new socio-cultural environment (Kim 1979; Yang, Wu, Zhu and Southwell 2004). Due to various challenging postulates, the acculturation phase was set to move to the third phase. In the 1970s, ethnic media researchers (Ballinger and King 1992; Johnson 2000; Melkote and Liu 2000) dropped the term acculturation in favor of the term of pluralism.

The pluralism stage led to the creation of many ethnic media outlets in the United States. Chinese language media (CLM) initially took root in the American-

dominated media in order to smooth and provide important tools to foster the newcomers' adaptation to the mainstream American society (Zhou and Cai 2002). Also, new Chinese immigrants used a wide variety of media, including television, radio, movies, magazines, and most recently, electronic publications and broadcasting to strengthen and support their bilingualism-biculturalism processes (Zhou and Cai 2002).

In short, ethnic media may lessen the cultural gap between the mainstream society and minority communities and preserve cultural ties. Ethnic media also can build up immigrant minorities' understandings regarding the mainstream culture because they receive the information in their native languages (Lee, 2004). Thus, immigrant minorities should be conscious of the existence of their cultural duality in order to actively participate in the two cultural spheres. So far, this literature review is important to understand how ethnic media influence cultural identities among new immigrant minorities.

Without any doubt, adult minorities are often acculturated within two or more cultural frameworks simultaneously. They may maintain values and practices of their heritage culture through family members, members of their racial groups, and ethnic media while adjusting themselves to the host culture value-based system and norms through friends, colleagues and mainstream media. In the United States, new Chinese immigrants, especially ESL and college students, are also exposed to a third culture and/or fourth culture through other immigrant minorities who recreate their own cultural frameworks within a salad bowl America.

In fact, the process of developing a bicultural identity in predominantly monolingual-monocultural cultures is complex. From cross-cultural adaptation and community of practice approaches (Kim, 1996, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002), it implies a move from the periphery to the center of both cultures. In other words, it requires the participant to strengthen his or her heritage culture status while acquiring and developing the needed human competences to become a cultural insider of his/her host culture.

From the cross-cultural adaptation viewpoint (Kim 1977, 1988, 2001), learning is central to intercultural communication. Individuals involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes are weighed down by the stress of entering a new cultural environment. They may experience confusion, self-doubt, and frustration when they encounter internal or external conflicts between their ethnic and host cultures. In order to reduce the cross-cultural stress and overcome challenges, they should learn how to adapt to the new culture. The cross-cultural adaptation process is characterized by stress-adaptation-growth which is facilitated by interacting with members in the new cultural environment and mass media (Kim 2001). However, when individuals learn new cultural elements (acculturation), they unconsciously lose some cultural elements of their home country to some extent (deculturation). Cultural identities change, form and develop through communication and social interaction (Kim 1979, 2001).

Certainly, Chinese professionals, who graduated from ESL programs in the United States (also called in this paper Chinese ESL learners), as well as many new

immigrants, in the United States, involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, experience acculturation and deculturation effects discussed in Kim's (2001) research. Ethnic media may provide Chinese ESL learners with opportunities to complement their interpersonal communication experiences and activities especially when they are far away from their home land. In addition, exposure to ethnic mass communication assists them in strengthening their cultural identity (Kim 1988; 2001) while remaining at the periphery of their host culture. Simply put, ethnic media might act as a barrier in Chinese ESL learners' cross-cultural adaptation process. This idea of moving from the host culture periphery is well elaborated in Wenger's (1998) concept of community of practice.

In fact, Wenger, McDermott and Snyder's (2002) notion of community of practices can be defined as groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis. The aforementioned scholars believed that learning relies on domain, community and practices.

As members of the Chinese community in the United States, Chinese ESL learners have been favored by ethnic media which help them to strengthen their cultural heritage status while moving from the periphery of their host culture to the center. Exposure to ethnic media might provide Chinese ESL learners with opportunities to (1) participate in the Chinese community, which in turn sustain ethnic identity, (2) receive social support from others, and (3) move from being passive cultural learners to active practitioners or knowledge contributors. At the same time, Chinese ESL learners set to work accumulating rich resources, skills, and knowledge regarding their host culture from the cultural periphery to become competent cultural insiders. From the above discussion, it does follow that the exposure to ethnic media has a strong bond to cultures and the development of cultural identities. In the next section, we will highlight various formats of ethnic media.

### **Formats of Ethnic Media and Cultural Identities**

Ethnic media scholars (Jeffres 2000; Ferle and Morimoto 2009; Johnson 2000) have used various formats to facilitate the development of a relationship between ethnic media and identity. Information can be delivered by air, print, and online. Traditional or electronic publications are well-known formats that have been used in the past. Zhang and Xiaoming (1999) documented the potential benefits of electronic Chinese publications. Their study demonstrated that ethnic media can encourage the exploration of diverse possibilities regarding the enhancement of minorities' sense of identities. Later, Johnson (2000) conducted an exploratory study of Latina magazines where he articulated the necessity of providing U.S. Hispanic with ethnic magazines, so that they can maintain and transmit their ethnic culture and build up their ethnic pride.

More recently, Ferle and Morimoto (2009) examined the impact of ethnic identification on the use of ethnic media between Asian American working adults and Asian American students. The results showed that Asian Americans with a high sense of ethnic identification frequently used ethnic media regardless of their life-stage (student or working adult).

According to the research results from *Chinese for Affirmative Action* and the *Association of Chinese Teachers* (1980), television programs make Chinese-American children conscious of their bicultural identity because the media highlighted the differences and/or conflicts between the traditional Chinese and dominant cultures.

Although research on immigrant minorities cultural identity development (Lee 2004; Moon and Park 2007; Park 2009) revealed that mainstream or ethnic media were significantly associated with ethnic identity, so far, the majority of studies has mainly focused on Hispanic and African American groups keeping an absolute silence on Chinese immigrant minorities (Faber, O'Guinn and Meyer 1986; Fujioka 2005; Godfried 2002; Neuendorf 1982; Rivadeneyra, Ward and Gordon 2007). However, as described above, Asian Americans make up one of the three major ethnic groups (African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans) who frequently use ethnic media on a regular basis (New America Media 2009). Among these Asian Americans, adult Chinese, especially those young-adults involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, spent more time using ethnic media than other Asian groups. Thus, emphasis should be placed on this specific group of Chinese immigrants in order to understand how media influence their bicultural identity development in a predominantly monolingual society.

## Methods

It is worth to remind our reader that the main topic of inquiry of this paper consists of informing MEXTESOL Journal readers and those teachers involved in dual-language and adult ESL education of the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development in a predominantly English speaking society.

The study is grounded in one questionnaire (see Appendix I) and one in-depth interview. Unlike random sampling, purposeful sampling allows researchers to select participants who have in-depth knowledge of the topic of inquiry at hand or where information is rich (Patton 1990). For this research, the participants were recruited through university network of friends who will represent variation in the phenomenon of interest. The types of variation we were looking for including participants' preferences for media outlets, amount of time they spend using Chinese language media, and media usage motives.

The theoretical sampling criteria we used for participants' selection included the following: being a foreign-born Chinese who graduated from a college Intensive English Program in the United States and being currently categorized as an immigrant minority in the United States. According to Ogbu (1990) typology of minorities, immigrant minorities are those who voluntarily move to another society because they believe that the move may help them improve their economic status and in turn provide better opportunities or more political freedom. For the sake of confidentiality in describing the data, we assigned the following codification to refer to research participants: RP #1 (research participant #1), RP #2, RP #3, RP #4, RP #5, RP #6, etc. Also, we selected participants who consider themselves as bilingual/bicultural individuals.

Participant ages ranged from 25 to 35 and have been living in the United States from 0.95 to 10.3 years.

Signature of an informed consent which included procedures and protection of human beings was obtained from each participant. At first, participants had to fill out one 13 items web-based questionnaire related to their preferences for media outlets, the amount of time they spend using Chinese media, and their media usage motives. Based on their answers to the questionnaire (see Appendix I), we selected three participants who better represented the topic of inquiry for the in-depth phone interview.

The questionnaire, named Ethnic Media Survey (EMS), was an attempt to provide participants with opportunities to reflect on their ethnic media using patterns, attitudes, and perceptions to find out if they were consciously or unconsciously aware of the role ethnic media plays in their daily lives in general and bicultural identity development in particular. It was upgraded from Reece and Palmgreen's (2000) television viewing motives scale (TVMS). Reece and Palmgreen (2000) divided their original scales into six factors with a total of 30 questions. However, based on the purpose of this study, we reduced and upgraded the TVMS original version by adding some items relating to the cross-cultural variables. The EMS scale ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Later on, we coded the EMS items into four categories. Prior to sending it out, an expert review process was used to assess its validity.

In general, participants spent approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the TVMS questionnaire, which was the first step in the data collection process. Participants' responses were represented in a graphical format for further analysis. We assessed the credibility of data by sharing the emerging themes with participants. Furthermore, we compared data gathered from in-depth interview to questionnaire's responses in order to answer the research questions.

The purpose of the in-depth interview was not only to find out Chinese ESL learners' perceptions toward the use of ethnic media, but also how ethnic media influence their bicultural identity development. Each interview was conducted by phone and lasted approximately 50 minutes. Data were recorded through an interview protocol developed by the researchers.

For the sake of clarity in describing the data, we assigned the following codification to refer to the two sources of data: DI for data from the questionnaire (quantitative data) and DII for data from the interview (qualitative data). Data from the questionnaire (DI) were processed using graphical software (Kaleidagraph 3.5). Quantitative results were reviewed, along with patterns found in the qualitative analysis. Research findings were categorized into three themes. We used constant triangulation analysis to validate the accuracy of the finding themes. From the themes, we interpreted the data by reflecting on how the findings relate to previous studies. Finally, a narrative of findings was written as part of the research report presentation.

## Findings

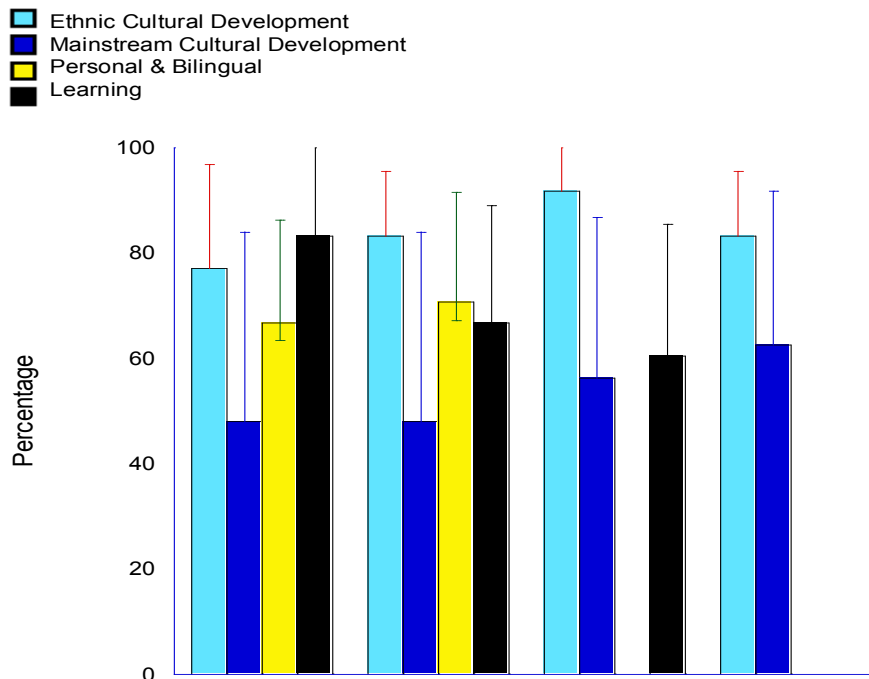
This section provides a brief description of the questionnaire results and finding themes. Some implications for ESL /dual language education will follow.

### **Summary of Questionnaire Results**

Overall, the DI showed that participants in this study spent 6.04 hours using ethnic media on a daily basis. The media outlets that they preferred to use after moving to the United States were the Internet and TV. Ninety-two percent ( $n=11$ ) of participants reported that they frequently used the Internet, while forty-two percent ( $n=5$ ) of participants liked to watch Chinese language TV. However, Chinese language newspapers and magazines were not popular among participants in this study, approximately eight ( $n=2$ ) percent of the participants reported that they read Chinese language newspapers, and none of them took Chinese language magazines into account when choosing the types of ethnic media they prefer.

In terms of ethnic media usage motives, participants answers ranged from 0 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The primary reading of the graph (see Graph 1) suggested that the strongest motives for using Chinese language media, as indicated by the mean scores, were ethnic cultural development ( $M=3.35$ ,  $SD=.40$ ), learning ( $M=2.81$ ,  $SD=.56$ ), personal and bicultural development ( $M=2.75$ ,  $SD=.35$ ), and mainstream cultural development ( $M=2.15$ ,  $SD=.55$ ).

GRAPH 1: MEAN OF CHINESE LANGUAGE MEDIA MOTIVES  
n = 12





## **Qualitative Findings**

Most of the participants indicated that they used ethnic media largely for creating, expanding, and exchanging knowledge of their ethnic culture. However, there were three interrelated findings of the qualitative data addressed here regarding how interviewees believed ethnic media affect their learning about themselves as well as others. In this section, we reviewed additional quantitative findings, along with patterns found in the qualitative analysis in order to address the research questions. Three major themes emerged; these were perceptions toward Chinese language media (CLM), the role of CLM in ethnic and mainstream cultures, and bicultural identity development.

The first research question was: what is foreign-born Chinese non-native English speaking professionals' perception toward the use of ethnic media one finding pattern emerged from the DII analysis.

### **Perceptions toward CLM**

All of the participants in this study revealed positive perceptions toward the use of CLM in their daily lives as well as cultural development. For example, RP # 5 argued: *I will have positive attitudes toward my Chinese group and community or I will feel proud of being Taiwanese when I see successful stories shown on Chinese language media (quote from DII of December 5, 2009).*

A difference between Chinese immigrant minorities' responses to ethnic media messages between cultures also existed. The immigrant minority adults learn their ethnic background, values, and cultural practices, whereas they learn little American culture from ethnic media. RP # 5 said that: *I may be more prone to learn Chinese culture than American culture I can learn American culture if the news or movies include it (quote from DII of December 5, 2009).*

RP #5's experiences were widely shared by other interviewees. RP # 4 recalled learning about himself and others of diverse cultures. He expressed his ideas as follows: *With the aid of Chinese language media, I learn Chinese culture more than American culture. I believe that I have two cultures inside myself; however, I do not mix both cultures together into one, just as people may have dual personality. I still retain my origin, culture, and ethnicity while becoming a member of the new country. I embrace the great diversity of cultures because I not only retain my ethnic cultural aspects but also add some cultural aspects in mainstream society which I believe are good for myself or my children in the near future. Also, I will completely rule out some mainstream cultural aspects with which I do not agree. For example, I know that in American culture, parents are less likely to support their children to go to college; they may have to work in order to pay the tuition. I would not do that. In Chinese culture, parents often make sacrifices for their children; they will work hard to take care of everything for their children to go to schools without worry (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

The second research question was: how do ethnic media outlets influence adult Chinese immigrant bicultural identity development? Two finding patterns emerged from DII analysis.

### **The Role of CLM**

Participants were able to consciously clarify the different roles CLM play in ethnic and mainstream cultural development. Ethnic media provide the Chinese immigrant minorities with opportunities to make a connection and communicate with their Chinese culture and society. On the other hand, in the mainstream cultural development, ethnic media provide useful tactics for living in and understanding the new environment.

Overall ethnic media function as information providers regarding the ethnic group and the mainstream cultural environment. RP # 4 stated: *I have to use Chinese language media, such as ePapers; otherwise, I feel that I lose connection with my country, and my Chinese language would regress. I need to know about the rapid change of Chinese culture and society. Otherwise, I would feel anxious and nostalgic. Using ethnic media makes me feel comfortable; listening to Chinese language music diminishes my feeling of homesickness. For example, when I browse world journal, normally, I seek news and events happening in Taiwan and Los Angeles, and then I check global and U.S. news superficially. However, I heavily depend on ePapers to comprehend some concerns of mine such as information regarding taxes, immigration and economic news. I just take advantage of my native language, which makes it easy for me to understand certain subject areas. Furthermore, I use Chinese newspapers to look for houses, jobs, restaurants, and airline tickets (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Similarly, RP# 3 explained that being exposed to CLM was crucial to the development of her ethnic cultural knowledge. She argued that: *mainstream media is not going to cover what we see as small and local stories or events regarding our country; they only cover news headlines. Without ethnic media, we will not have certain issues on tables, and you cannot educate children about these issues. Also, without ethnic media, communication within our ethnic community will be lost (quote from DII of December 1, 2009).*

In addition, CLM not only eliminate the feelings of being uprooted from the ethnic/racial cultures, but also function as an agent of socialization that increase the opportunities to meet Chinese people locally, which helps them develop a sense of closeness and belonging to ethnic society. RP # 5 explained this idea in the following terms: *I became homesick after coming to the United States. CLM can help me alleviate the feelings of loneliness and alienation. CLM also are good for creating a social network, such as friendship. I do not have opportunities to meet other Chinese people except for Chinese church. However, I use some online sites to compensate for my lack of ethnic friends in the United States (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

In fact, RP #5 claim confirmed that the more a young Asian adult is associated with friends from his or her own ethnic group, the more likely he or she is to possess a strong ethnic identity (Xu, Shim, Lotz and Almeida 2004).

### **Bicultural Identity Development**

Integrative awareness. All interviewees found it not easy to balance both Chinese and American cultures regardless of the aid of ethnic media. However, due to

different situations, they may have different cultural identifications of themselves. Participants in this study may self-designate different cultural identification and view issues from different cultural perspectives depending on different situations, yet they still feel comfortable in participating in both cultural spheres. Those minority adults appear to fit the final stage, integrative awareness described by Sue & Sue (1990 as cited in Yeh & Hwang 2000).

For example, RP # 5 stated: *When dealing with things, I tend to combine the American and Chinese ways. Every culture is unique and has its strengths and weakness. If I feel that my Chinese and American cultures are incompatible to some degree, I will create my own cultural framework which I try to remain neutral during the cross-cultural debate. Similarly, it may be hard to describe such thing as a pure state of being Chinese or a pure state of being American. When I go back to Taiwan, I feel that I have the American side of me, whereas I feel that I have the Chinese side of me when I am in the United States (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

RP # 4 assented to the above point, explaining: *When people crystallize their ethnic thoughts and cultures, they may not easily accept the second one. I am more American when I deal with car insurance agent because I cannot use my Chinese ways of problem solving, which I have to keep silent (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Coherent bicultural identity. All interviewees stated that they can learn more Chinese cultural information than American via the use of ethnic media; however, when dealing with both cultures, they still combine their Chinese and Americans cultures as a whole. Following Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan and Szapocznik's (2005) definition, our interviewees who may possess coherent identity are defined as individuals "having the ability to bring together disparate elements into an organized and well-functioning whole. This idea is well expressed by RP # 5 who argued: *I did not feel like holding a separate cultural identity, partitioned into two cultures, and experience cultural conflicts, especially concerning the use of ethnic media (quote from DII of December 3, 2009).*

Bicultural competence. Developing a coherent bicultural and/or intercultural identity requires strong bicultural and/or intercultural competence. Interview data revealed that participants used ethnic media to reinforce their personal and bicultural values. They seem to fit the model of the bicultural competence described by LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton (1993 as cited in Stroink and Lalonde 2009). They suggested that the foundation of bicultural competence is that an individual develops a sense of both personal and cultural identities. Thus, bicultural individuals are proficient in two diverse cultures. LaFromboise, Coleman and Gerton, cited in Stroink and Lalonde (2009), highlighted six factors of developing bicultural competence, including the following: (a) knowledge of cultural beliefs and values, (b) positive attitude toward both groups, (c) belief that one is able to function effectively within both cultures, (d) ability to communicate within both cultures, (e) ability to behave appropriately within both cultures, and (f) secure social network within each culture.

In general, participants were positive about the use of ethnic media. Overall data analysis suggested that ethnic media help them to strengthen their ethnic background, values, and cultural practices, whereas learning minimally about American culture from CLM. Similarly, they identified themselves strongly with Chinese culture. However, they highlighted different roles CLM play in ethnic and mainstream American cultures. Ethnic media technologies help Chinese immigrant minorities (1) make a connection, socialize, and communicate with, (2) acquire their ethnic cultural information, and (3) eliminate the feelings of being uprooted from their Chinese culture and society.

In response to mainstream culture, ethnic media technologies help Chinese immigrant minorities to minimally (1) build up the understanding of American cultural background, (2) provide tactics for living in the United States, (3) integrate into the mainstream society, and (4) clarify important concerns of them.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Although researchers have studied the impact of mainstream or ethnic media on children from culturally diverse background's identity development and other related topics, few studies have emphasized its impact on young adult immigrant minorities, involved in cross-cultural adaptation in predominantly monolingual-mono-cultural settings. This study analyzed Chinese ESL learners' preferences for ethnic media outlets, the amount of time they spend using ethnic media and the usage motives. From data analysis, we can infer some general postulates about the importance of ethnic media use for non-native English speaking individuals involved in bicultural identity developmental processes.

### ***Ethnic Media Use***

Results show that CLM play an important role in the cross-cultural adaptation and identity development processes among Chinese ESL learners. Participants spent 6.04 hours using CLM on a daily basis. The reasons for usage times varied among them based on their ages and occupations. Participants in their 20s (8.08 hours) spent more time using ethnic media than participants in their 30s (4 hours) in their daily lives. DI and DII from participants in their 20s were all collected from professionals who might have more free time and no family responsibilities than others. Overall, Chinese ESL learners spent great amounts of time with electronic media and less time with printed ones.

Electronic Internet media was the most popular among participants, whereas none of them spent time reading ethnic magazines. The difference in use may stem from the fact that participants have resided in predominantly Hispanic areas where Chinese-oriented print media were limited. Participants have little access to Chinese magazines, newspapers, television programs, and radio stations, etc. In general, the results clearly suggest that internet-based ethnic media is one of the best tools to reach Chinese immigrant minorities.

Similar to previous studies of ethnic and mainstream media habits (Yang, Wu, Zhu and Southwell 2004), Chinese ESL learners were found to spend less time listening to Chinese music, watching Chinese videos and moves, and reading

Chinese magazines and newspapers than they were in China. On the other hand, they spent a considerable amount of time using email, instant messenger programs, online news and literature after they moved to the United States. Research (Yang, Wu, Zhu, and Southwell 2004) suggested that new media technologies may be a driving force for the rise of electronic Chinese language media.

### ***Ethnic Media Use and Intercultural Identity Development***

Findings show that the influence of ethnic media on cultural identification differs from culture to culture. As discussed earlier, there is strong incentive for participants to use CLM. They retain their ethnic/cultural traditions, values, behaviors, and customs, but at the same time, they develop some cultural identification with the host society at some degree. Thus, CLM provide research participants with a sense of belonging to Chinese and American societies. However, emotional belonging feelings differ from one culture to another. This finding suggested that new immigrants should spend a constant amount of time using mainstream (Ballinger and King 1992; Kim, 2001; Miglietta and Tartaglia 2009) and ethnic media (Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009; Lee 2004; Melkote and Liu 2000; Subervi-Velez 1986) in order to enhance their cross-cultural identities and values.

Moreover, CLM is used to help research participants remain cultural insiders of their heritage culture. Research data support Kim (2001)'s viewpoints when she argued that many new immigrants in the United States involved in cross-cultural adaptation processes, experience acculturation and deculturation effects. Therefore, mass communication and social interaction might help to soften these challenges.

Comparative data analysis also suggested that CLM improve linguistic and cultural fluencies. The more research participants maintain their heritage society's cultural insider status, the more vocabulary and cultural knowledge they get. Consequently, research findings support recent studies (Lam 2006; Lam and Rosario-Ramos 2009; Park, 2009; Raman and Harwood 2008) on how ethnic media technologies assist new immigrants in developing and strengthening their linguistic and cultural fluencies by helping them to (1) develop transnational relationship across countries, (2) affiliate and socialize with their racial/ethnic people and communities, (3) maintain their cultural identity and heritage, and (4) provide information which is not available in mainstream media.

At last, all interviewees believed that CLM helped them move from the periphery of their host culture to the center. There is no shortcut to becoming a full participant of the community. The move from the periphery to the center only takes place, in Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) terms, through active engagement in socio-cultural practices. Even interviewees, in this study who are proficient in English, seem to prefer associating themselves with Chinese immigrants.

In addition, findings from this study support the relationship between exposure to ethnic media and cross-cultural and intercultural identity development. It also provides insights on how ESL and dual language teachers might effectively use

ethnic media to strengthen bilingual, dual-language and non-native English speaking learners' (children and adults) intercultural identity development processes.

### ***Implications for Bilingual (Dual-Language) Education***

This study provides insights on how teachers can use ethnic media to strengthen bilingual, dual-language and non-native English speaking learners' (children and adults) intercultural identity development processes in multicultural settings. It targeted Chinese ESL learners; however teachers can easily adapt some of the findings to better serve dual-language students as follows:

Spend a constant amount of time using ethnic media. In this study, participants spent an average of 6.04 hours to remain cultural insider of their ethnic group. Thus, in dual-language classrooms, teachers might encourage students from the dominant culture who are learning the minority language and culture to wisely use exposure to quality ethnic media to help them move from the minority culture's periphery to the center.

Correspondingly, in subtractive bilingualism settings, one way and two ways dual-language teachers might motivate their non-dominant students who are learning the majority language and culture to wisely use exposure to quality media to help them become cultural insider of the mainstream society while using their respective ethnic media to strengthening their cultural insidership status in their ethnic group.

Moreover, research data suggested an explicit relationship between abundant exposure to ethnic media to oral fluency and vocabulary acquisition. Dual-language teachers should use wise criteria in recommending mainstream and ethnic media exposure to dual-language parents. Findings suggested that qualitative and abundant exposure to ethnic media has the power of boosting up linguistic and cultural fluencies in both cultures.

Developing teachers' cultural knowledge/awareness. Teachers need to equip themselves with the necessary knowledge to understand their students' ethnic culture to effectively include ethnic media into the curriculum. It may be difficult for teachers to form connections with students, from linguistically and culturally diverse background, if they do not understand the ethnic media language. Despite the language barriers, dual-language teachers need to be exposed to rich linguistic and cultural environments. They might do so through direct exposure (interaction with people of diverse cultural and linguistic background) and/or indirectly through readings and exposure to ethnic media technologies as suggested by McAllister and Irvine (2000). Ethnic media might help dual-language teachers increase their cultural knowledge, awareness and competence in order to be responsive towards diverse students' cultures.

Developing multicultural communities in classrooms. Dual-language teachers can provide ample opportunities for students to get involved in multicultural environments and be exposed to ethnic media. They can render opportunities for dual-language students to teach their racial/ethnic cultures or languages in classes, which may be win-win situations. With the help of ethnic media, minority

students may promote their cultural sharing and pride in ethnicity and particularly, in intercultural settings. In addition, mainstream students may learn about other cultures beyond superficial levels and may ascertain the ways people from different cultures think, believe and behave. For example, minority students can share their cultures in classes through showing their ethnic movies or music which offer cultural examples and trigger discussions on ethnicity, whereas, English-speaking students can use mainstream media to introduce American culture.

Help students develop a sense of synergy. Dual-language teachers can link students (native and non-native English speaking) with non-native English speaking students' community-based organizations in order to help them learn how to become cultural insiders of this ethnic group. Students might have opportunities to practice non-dominant language and cultural skills with experts and older immigrants who have preserved their cultural heritage. They might learn what types of media outlets they use in order to do so. Dual-language parents might be invited to join this kind of projects, which may result in increased parental involvement in their children's education.

As stated above, the main topic of inquiry of this paper consisted of informing MEXTESOL Journal readers and those teachers involved in dual-language and adult ESL education on the power of media technologies on learners' intercultural identity/personality development. At last, research findings suggested that media technologies provide venues for ESL and dual-language students to develop social relationships and produce a sense of belonging, and reinforce cultural identities (Tuftte 2001). Therefore, more in-depth exploration studies about the impact of media technologies (mainstream and ethnic) on ESL/EFL and dual-language learners' intercultural identity development are needed in order to better understand the dynamic of intercultural identity/personality in predominantly subtractive bilingualism settings.

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## Appendix I: Ethnic Media Survey

Upgraded from Reece and Palmgreen (2000)'s Television Viewing Motives Scale  
(see full citation in references)

### Background Information

- **Age:**                    25-30                    30-35                    35-40
- **Gender:**                M                        F
- **Your country of birth:** \_\_\_\_\_
- **If you were born in a country outside the U.S., how long have you lived in the U.S.?** \_\_\_\_\_ years \_\_\_\_\_ months
- **Are you currently living in the U.S. temporarily (e.g., for college)?** Yes No
- **How many hours do you use Chinese language media per day?** \_\_\_\_\_  
(For example, Chinese radio, newspapers, magazines, Internet, videos, broadcast, and TV.)
- **What media outlets do you frequently use?** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please see the above media outlets)

### Cultural Identification

Very Weak   Weak   Strong   Very Strong

- |                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. American          | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5  |
| 2. Chinese/Taiwanese | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5- |
| 3. Other             | 1-----2-----3-----4-----5  |

### Factor loadings on Chinese language media using motives

Scale: Strongly Disagree = 0   Disagree = 1   Undecided = 2   Agree = 3  
Strongly Agree = 4

**Please, react to the following statements: I use Chinese language media.....**

**1. So I can learn more about Chinese values and cultures**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**2. So I can see how Chinese/Taiwanese interact socially**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**3. So I can find out what is going on in my country (Taiwan/China)**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**4. So I can learn about local events and issues (Taiwan/China)**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**5. So I can learn more about American values and cultures**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**6. So I can see how Americans interact socially**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**7. So I can find out what is going on in the U.S. A.**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**8. So I can learn about local events and issues (U.S.)**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**9. Because I see my personal values reinforced**

Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Undecided   Agree   Strongly Agree

**10. Because I see my bicultural values reinforced**

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

**11. So I can find out what is going on in the world**

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

**12. So I can learn about what could happen to me**

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree

**13. So I can learn how to do things which I have never done**

Strongly Disagree Disagree Undecided Agree Strongly Agree