

# Parental motivations and heritage language schooling: A study of Japanese and Marathi parents

---

**Pallavi Atre**

*La Trobe University, Australia: p.atre@latrobe.edu.au*

*This qualitative comparative case study investigates the links between parental motivations and young (aged 4–12) heritage language learners' heritage language school attendance. The study aimed to understand parental motivations, drawing on the instrumental and integrative motivation framework. The study addresses two research questions: 1) Why do parents send their children to heritage language schools? 2) How best can we explain parental motivations in heritage language school participation? An analysis of semi-structured interviews with 15 Marathi and 15 Japanese parents revealed that both groups prefer heritage language schooling for their young children. Findings indicate that rather than instrumental motivation, it is Marathi and Japanese parents' strong integrative-affective motivations that contribute to children's heritage language schooling. This research suggests that parental motivation can more effectively be explained in terms of a continuum between instrumental and integrative-affective motivation instead of a mutually exclusive binary state. The study underlines the importance of parental motivations in the case of young learners' access to heritage language schools and provides empirical evidence on parents' role in heritage language schooling.*

*Keywords: heritage language; Marathi; Japanese; comparative study; motivation*

## INTRODUCTION

Heritage language (HL) learning has been receiving increasing attention in Australia, where almost half of the residents (48.2%) have a parent born overseas, and 29.1% of the population is born overseas. Australians speak over 400 languages, including approximately 250 HLs and 167 Indigenous languages. Some of the most widely spoken languages are Mandarin, Arabic, Vietnamese, Cantonese, Punjabi, Greek and Italian. Apart from global languages like Spanish, French and Japanese, there is a noteworthy presence of more marginal languages like Marathi, Karen and Tswana (ABS, 2021).

Researchers acknowledge the value of HL maintenance and document the importance of integrating HL teaching programs in mainstream schools (Willoughby, 2018), discuss Chinese HL learners' (HLL) commitment to language learning by adapting a Bourdieusian framework (Mu, 2014) and identify how Swedish parents enrol children in heritage language schools (HLSs) (Nordstrom, 2016). Scholars have probed different HL programmes, community-level efforts and the psychological factors involved in heritage language learning and maintenance. For example, Okano (2013) examines the significance of ethnic schools in Japan; Ghaffar-Kucher and Mahajan (2012) showcase community-based efforts in HL maintenance through case studies of Hindi and Punjabi language programs in New York City; Tsushima and Guardado (2019) reported on the experiences of Japanese mothers in Canada nurturing HL among their children; and Xu and Moloney (2014) present research findings from an Australian case study seeking to understand Chinese HLs' learning needs and motivations. Drawing on the studies of different HLs, HLL and HLSs from around the world that reveal the significant

contributions of communities, HLSs and parents in the linguistic and cultural empowerment of children, this study sets out to identify parental motivations affecting HLL language retention.

This comparative study of Marathi (people from the state of Maharashtra, India) and Japanese parents directs attention beyond a single-language parent cohort. It examines parental motivations behind sending young children (aged 4–12 years) to HLSs in Melbourne, Victoria. Two questions guided this research: 1) Why do parents send their children to HLSs? 2) How best can we explain parental motivations in HLS participation? The study found that parental motivations are crucial in maintaining HL when young learners are separated logistically and psychologically from the target language and culture. I argue that integrative-affective motivation in parents is the major motivation for sending young children to HLSs. This study uses a comparative qualitative methodology, drawing on data collected between 2018 and 2019 at a Marathi heritage language school (MHLS) and a Japanese heritage language school (JHLS) in Melbourne. My positionality as a diaspora Marathi mother, my interest and proficiency in the Japanese language, my accessibility to field data and the lack of literature on the Marathi language in the HL education field influenced my decision to select two very different Asian migrant groups in their attributes (language and perceived language value) sharing a common goal of language maintenance through HL schooling for this study. This study identifies the parental perceptions of HL schooling for a globally popular language like Japanese and a ‘truly less commonly taught language’ (Gambhir, 2001) like Marathi.

The paper makes original contributions to the existing literature on HLL by highlighting the importance of HLSs and providing arguments that speak for the decision of HL schooling at a young age by comparing a language with a high perceived value and one with a low perceived value in society. In doing so, this study acknowledges the critical role of parents’ (of children aged 4–12 years) motivation in HL schooling and maintenance for any migrant language. First, it explores the language maintenance efforts of the ‘truly less commonly taught language’ (Gambhir 2001), the Marathi language community, which has not received any attention in HL education research. Second, it conceptualises the parental motivation continuum by modifying existing concepts of motivations (Gardner, 2007). Third, it disseminates practical insights to all migrant communities, including ‘truly less commonly taught language’ communities in Melbourne and beyond, that parental motivation influences HL schooling decisions, contributing to HL maintenance for learners and emotional satisfaction for parents.

The paper begins by discussing the definitions of HL and HLL, then looks at Marathi and Japanese as HLs in the Australian context before discussing the concept of motivation. It then presents findings and discussion.

## **HERITAGE LANGUAGE AND HERITAGE LANGUAGE LEARNERS**

Australian researchers provide valuable insights into the importance of HL learning. To be more specific, Koshiha (2020) explored the identity of three Japanese youths in an HL classroom. Liddicoat (2017) addressed HLLs’ needs in the Australian context. Xu and Moloney (2017) explored Chinese HLLs’ perceptions of intercultural learning tasks. The role of Japanese HLSs has been well-researched in the UK (Danjo & Moreh, 2020), the US (Chinen & Tucker, 2005; Doerr & Lee, 2009) and Australia (Kawasaki, 2014; Oriyama, 2010, 2012). Japanese language learning has been promoted in Australia because Asian language literacy would strengthen Australia’s position in the Asian market (COAG, 1994). As such, there has been an increase in Japanese language students, including HLLs. However, literature on Marathi as HL is lacking,

possibly due to the small number of HLLs, the less perceived value of Marathi due to its status as an Indian regional language and the fact that most Marathi HLSs are relatively young.

Defining HL and HLL is not straightforward. Not all non-English language learners can be defined as ‘foreign’ or second language learners. The term ‘heritage language’ was coined in Canada in the 1970s (Cummins, 2014). Alternative terms for HL are languages other than English (LOTE) (Clyne, 1991), community languages (Wiley, 2005), immigrant minority languages (Extra & Yagmur, 2002) or ancestral languages (Eisenlohr, 2004). In the Australian context, ‘community languages’ is commonly used to refer to HL (Montrul, 2016), and includes all the immigrant LOTE and the Australian indigenous languages (Clyne, 1991). Definitions of HLLs can be divided into broader and narrower descriptions. Scholars adopting a broad definition of HLLs highlight a strong cultural connection to the language through family or community, placing less importance on the learner’s HL proficiency (Fishman, 2001; Hornberger & Wang, 2008). In the narrower approach, scholars strictly describe the HL requirements at a functional level (Montrul, 2010; Polinsky & Kagan, 2007). I prefer to use ‘heritage language, as I consider the term ‘heritage’ comprises historical, social, cultural and emotional aspects that establish a direct connection between the learner and their ethnicity.

In this study, the term HLL describes Marathi HLLs and Japanese HLLs who a) have been educated primarily in English, b) were born in Australia or migrated to Australia at a young age, c) are residing in Australia, d) are Marathi or Japanese language learners with a heritage connection to Marathi or Japanese communities, and e) may or may not be bilingual in Marathi and English or Japanese and English.

The current study uses empirical evidence to shed light on Marathi and Japanese parents’ perceptions of HL schooling.

## MARATHI AND JAPANESE AS HERITAGE LANGUAGES IN AUSTRALIA

Marathi is an emerging language in HL education because of the relatively new status of Marathi people as migrants compared to other European and Southeast Asian migrants. Marathi HLSs have been operational in North America and Canada since the mid-21<sup>st</sup> century (BMM, 2018). The Marathi community in Australia started the first Marathi HLS in Sydney, New South Wales, in 2008. Presently, three additional Marathi HLSs are operational in the country: Adelaide (South Australia), Brisbane (Queensland) and Melbourne (Victoria).

In 2015, there were 89 full-time Japanese schools in 50 countries and 205 HLSs across 52 countries (文部科学省-Monbukagakusho, 2016). Japan’s Ministry of Education introduced *Nihonjingakko* (full-time Japanese schools) and *hoshuko* (supplementary schools—in this study, HLSs) to address the problems of *kikokushijo* (children of overseas returnee citizens) (Goodman, 2003). These Japanese-style schools educate Japanese children growing up abroad using a Japanese compulsory curriculum in English and maths, enabling them to adjust to Japan’s education system upon their return. The Japan Foundation, Sydney, established in 1978 by the Japanese government, supports Japanese HL education in Australia through initiatives such as the Australian Network for Japanese as Community Language (ANJCL). ANJCL collaborates with Japanese HLLs and their parents by acknowledging their needs and challenges while aiming to create a community for young HLLs and their parents in Australia (ANJCL, 2023). Twenty-seven Japanese HLSs operate across all Australian states and territories (JPF-Sydney, 2023). I will concentrate on the Victorian context as this study’s two schools, Marathi and Japanese, are in Melbourne, Victoria.

## **HERITAGE LANGUAGE EDUCATION PROVIDERS IN VICTORIA**

Victorian students can study a modern language, a foreign language or their HL as a first or second language under the umbrella term ‘LOTE’ in primary and early secondary schools. Children can choose to learn HLs at three institutions: mainstream schools (primary and early secondary levels), Victorian School of Languages (VSL, a government-run out-of-school hours language school) and HLSs (community language schools). Alternatively, parents can opt for private language learning institutes, language-specific playgroups or private tutors.

Victoria’s HLSs association, Community Languages Victoria (CLV), supports and represents the diverse and fragmented HLSs across Victoria. HLSs are incorporated, community-based, not-for-profit organisations accredited by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for funding purposes. In 2020, nearly 40,000 students learnt 47 languages (State-of-Victoria-DET, 2021) for a minimum of 2.5 hours a week at around 200 HLSs in Victoria.

The 2021 language provision report for Victoria demonstrates that not all language providers offer all languages. For example, the only option for Marathi students is to attend an HLS. As such, HLSs are essential for ‘truly less commonly taught languages’ (Gambhir, 2001) like Marathi. Japanese is the third most popular LOTE in Victorian mainstream schools (State-of-Victoria-DET, 2021). Students can study Japanese at their mainstream schools, VSL and HLS, but the student population learning Japanese is diverse, from foreign language and second language learners to HLLs. Government policy does not distinguish between types of learners. Difficulties in accessing language education mean that factors such as parental motivation become significant.

## **MOTIVATION AND HL LEARNING**

Researchers commonly define ‘motivation’ as engaging in an activity with some goal (Dörnyei, 2001). The motivation for learning arises from an individual’s biological, psychological, social and cognitive needs. Motivation is central in explaining learners’ successes and failures in the learning process in psychology, any field of education and language learning (Dörnyei, 2009). Social psychologists Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) argue that motivation is vital in L2<sup>1</sup> learning besides aptitude and intelligence. Their work dominated motivation research for around three decades, from 1959 to 1990 (Dörnyei, 2001), and since then, it has continued to develop further by scholars in different contexts to date (Peng, 2023; Rosiak, 2023). This study builds on Gardner and Lambert’s motivation concepts.

Gardner defined motivation in a language learning context as ‘the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favourable attitudes toward learning the language’ (1985, p. 10). Gardner and Lambert (1972) argue that motivation to learn an L2 is not the same as motivation to learn other subjects. An L2 learner has to learn grammar and vocabulary while showing a willingness to be integrated with the L2 community. The first theory of L2 motivation developed by Gardner and Lambert incorporated ‘instrumental orientation (desire to gain social recognition and economic advantage through foreign language knowledge) and integrative orientation (learner’s desire to be part of a target language group)’ (1972, p. 14). In 1975, Gardner first proposed the socio-educational model of L2 motivation,

---

<sup>1</sup> Here, I consider that the L2 learner is similar to a foreign language learner and different from HLL as they do not have any family or ancestral connection with the target language. However, the language learning process is similar.

which has since been revised multiple times. L2 scholars do not necessarily agree with Gardner's historical notion of integrative-ness because L2 learners can also comprise foreign language learners who might not consider the need to integrate into the target culture because of geographical, cultural and political reasons. In recent years, Gardner (2010) has suggested that integrative orientation incorporates L2 learners' favourable interest towards the target language, culture and people. The criticisms of the Gardnerian model of L2 motivation led to the development of the Motivational Self System framework (L2MSS) by Dörnyei (2005).

This study uses Gardner's pioneering concepts of motivation, which retains a strong intellectual appeal and considerable empirical usefulness even today for motivation studies (Peng, 2023; Rosiak, 2023). In conceptualising HL learning motivations, we can conceive two types of L2 motivations: integrative (pertaining to the willingness to learn the language to identify and connect with the target language community) and instrumental (referring to utilitarian values such as obtaining a good job, fulfilling the foreign language requirement at university or travelling, and so on) (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

Research focusing on HLLs' motivations maintains that integrative motivation can give a positive advantage to HLLs because of their cultural background over the L2 learners. Titus (2018) found that prevalent integrative motivation among Russian HLLs' motivations is more influential than learners' language ability. Xu and Moloney (2019) discovered that the heritage cohort learns Chinese for integrative reasons such as familial heritage, cultural identity and parental views. Bondarenko's study (2015) of a Russian HLL exhibited solid instrumental motivation for learning Russian. In a comparative study of 120 Chinese HLLs and non-HLLs, Lu and Li (2008) demonstrated that learners were both instrumentally and integratively motivated. Wen's study (2011) of 176 Chinese HLLs in the US showcased powerful instrumental motivation among the learners. This research suggests that HLLs learn HL because of perceptions of the usefulness of the language while connecting with their ethnic background. Instead of focusing on HLL's motivations, the present study stresses the effect of Marathi and Japanese parents on HL schooling of their young children.

## **FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION**

I conducted fieldwork (observations and semi-structured interviews) at MHLS and JHLS in Melbourne on Saturdays (the school day for both schools) between April 2018 and November 2019. I carried out additional interviews in other locations. The interview questions consisted of participants' demographic information (age, education, marriage status, linguistic, career and migration background), desired outcomes of HL schooling, commitment to language learning and types of motivation orientations. Using the cases of Marathi and Japanese parents, I analysed the differences and similarities within each community and across communities on HL schooling where Japanese is an established HL with a long history and value in the mainstream school curriculum, and Marathi is 'truly a less commonly taught language' (Gambhir, 2001). I briefly describe the two fieldwork locations below.

### **Marathi heritage language school**

The MHLS has evolved multidimensionally since its opening in September 2015. The school is situated in the suburb of Dandenong, a south-eastern part of Greater Melbourne, 34 kilometres from the CBD, in an old neighbourhood house owned by the local council. The school operates from 2:30 pm to 5:00 pm every Saturday and consists of two-year levels, junior and senior, with a total of 34 enrolments. The school teaches the Marathi language and cultural activities to children aged 4–12. The school has not applied for funding and receives no

financial support from the Australian or Indian governments. Tuition fees are set at reasonable levels, mainly used to pay the rent of the premises.

### **Japanese heritage language school**

I chose Melbourne's oldest JHLS, founded in 1986. The school had 517 students between September 2019 and November 2019 when I collected data. School hours are 9:00 am to 3:00 pm every Saturday (except for the preschool). The school caters to students from kindergarten to year 12 and receives a subsidy from the Government of Japan and the State of Victoria besides regular school fees.

### **Parent participants**

Parent interviewees ranged in age from the early 30s to the late 50s, with the majority in their 30s. All migrated to Melbourne as first-generation adults, with the length of residence ranging from two to 30 years. The sample represents the fact that because of the recent increase in non-Anglo migration to Melbourne, the first-generation Marathi and Japanese migrants speaking Marathi and Japanese as their first languages are in the majority.

All 15 Marathi parents (almost equal numbers of mothers and fathers) migrated as skilled migrants (always husbands) with their families after completing basic graduation in India, and all married within the Marathi community. The family language is Marathi. Three Marathi parents completed schooling in English-medium schools, two in blended medium (Marathi and English), and the remaining participants attended Marathi-medium schools in India. All academically highly qualified Marathi parents are Australian citizens who migrated to Australia hoping for better education, job opportunities, health benefits and a higher standard of living than in India, highlighting that they are lifestyle migrants (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009). Only two Marathi parents mentioned that they might relocate to India in the future.

In contrast, out of 15 Japanese parents (13 mothers and two fathers), eleven mothers migrated alone and married non-Japanese partners after coming to Melbourne. The remaining two arrived as family migrants. Most of the Japanese families have English as their family language and a one-parent-one-language policy, where the Japanese mothers insist that their children must interact in Japanese with them and in English with their Anglo fathers (see Takeuchi, 2006). All the Japanese parents have mixed academic backgrounds (highly qualified to high school graduates), but all attended Japanese-medium schools in Japan and are permanent residents with Japanese citizenship. Maintaining Japanese citizenship is important for them to keep the option of returning to Japan open and not lose their identity as Japanese citizens.

## **FINDINGS: HL SCHOOLING MOTIVATIONS AMONG MARATHI AND JAPANESE PARENTS**

All Marathi and Japanese parents reported being emotionally satisfied when their children attended HLSs. All interviewed parents demonstrate a positive attitude towards their respective languages and want their children to be bilingual.

### **Motivation among Marathi parents**

For the Marathi parents, the main themes influencing parents' decisions about HL schooling of young children were as follows.

### **Future relocation to India (instrumental motivation)**

Only three parents recognised that a firm grasp of Marathi is necessary for relocation to Maharashtra. During the interviews, the parents who want to relocate to India, in the long run indicated that the critical goal of attending the MHLS was to teach Marathi.

Mr Chorage (age 38), a general physician by profession, points out,

Our long-term plan is to return to India. We were always worried that if our son does not learn Marathi now, it would be hard for him to cope with the surroundings upon our return. The language of the masses is still Marathi in Maharashtra. (Interview in Marathi, 25/08/2018)

### **Preserving the Marathi language (integrative-affective motivation)**

Studies show that parents want children to learn their HL because they consider it the child's first language (Choudhury, 2013; Creese & Blackledge, 2010). My observations at MHLS confirm this finding. Mrs Deshmane (age 28) explains the positive side of HL schooling:

My son will learn English naturally as he grows here in Australia. However, I should maintain Marathi. It is my language, so my son must know it, irrespective of where we stay. (Interview in Marathi, 13/10/2018)

### **Maintaining children's identity as Marathi (integrative-affective motivation)**

The decision of the Marathi parents to teach and maintain Marathi means accepting that their children are 'mainly Marathi'. This result is consistent with findings in previous research (Archakis, 2014), which found that HLLs maintain their cultural identities while integrating into the host country's culture. All parents perceive that MHLS also introduces the culture, and children develop an identity as Marathi. One parent, Mr Lokhande (age 38), puts it as follows:

I think Marathi is in my blood. All Maharashtrians should have pride in our Marathi. How will others respect our language if we do not show pride? It is a feeling of belongingness. We should protect what is ours and pass it on to our children. (Interview in Marathi, 01/10/2018)

Studies identify that investment in the HL is an investment in one's ethnic identity (Takei, 2020). Marathi parents from this study also recognise that an individual is not born with an ethnic identity. Identity formation is influenced, formed and changed by the individual, family and society. The MHLS plays a vital role in this process.

### **Teaching discipline to children (integrative-affective motivation)**

Marathi parents expect their children to learn a certain degree of 'discipline'. Parents feel that their idealistic view of child raising is threatened by the liberty the children get at mainstream schools. They feel that the MHLS constructs and negotiates children's behaviour to some extent. Mr Lokhande (age 38) succinctly points out as follows:

I feel the concepts of the discipline in Indian and Western cultures contradict at some point. In Australia, in the mainstream school, young children can lie down in the reading corner of the classroom, and study very relaxedly. This is not the way students behave in Indian schools. Respect for elders and language of communication, including one's body language, are vital components to gauge the upbringing of children. (Interview in Marathi, 01/10/2018)

### **Connecting with grandparents (integrative-affective motivation)**

Almost all my parent participants see MHLS as enabling children to communicate directly with grandparents. Empirical research demonstrates that HL competency helps to fill the intergenerational gaps (Hashimoto & Lee, 2011). My respondents mention that many

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

grandparents lack fluency in English and Hindi (the Indian national language). Maintaining the relationship between Marathi grandparents needs the child to have a minimum oral proficiency in the language. Mrs Chavan (age 32) contemplates:

I want my daughter to learn Marathi because my parents and grandparents do not know English. If my daughter cannot communicate in Marathi, how can they feel connected? I still remember when my daughter was not coming to the MHLS, and we visited India. She used English the whole time, and our relatives thought we were detached from them. (Interview in Marathi, 13/10/2018)

**Gaining social pride in the ethnic community (integrative-affective motivation)**

My interviewees feel a sense of pride and fulfilment when their children speak in Marathi with their relatives. The child's Marathi language fluency symbolises years of hard work put in by parents and keeping the family tradition of speaking Marathi alive. Mrs Jagtap (age 31), a mother of two daughters, says,

We are pleased that our daughters attend the MHLS and learn Marathi. My brother-in-law's family stays in Chattisgarh (a majority Hindi-speaking state in India). His children cannot converse in Marathi even though they live in India. They communicate in Hindi and English only. We live outside India, but my daughters understand, speak, read and write Marathi. (Interview in Marathi, 01/10/2018)

**Having a parental say (integrative-affective motivation)**

My interviews with the Marathi parents indicated that traditional Indian values are still rooted in most modern Marathi parents living in Australia. A few Marathi parents believe that teaching Marathi to children at the MHLS gives them parental authority in the house. Mr Kakde (age 43) states:

I feel comfortable using Marathi as it is my first language. I feel more confident when I speak in Marathi than in English. Today I can freely speak in Marathi at home, watch a Marathi movie of my choice, and even scold my son in Marathi. My son does not mind it. This is because he knows Marathi. If he had not known Marathi, then, as a father, I would have lost my voice in the family. (Interview in Marathi, 22/09/2018)

Marathi parents consider that the school promotes the Marathi language's importance and delivers the message to the students that they should use Marathi whenever possible. As a result, children do not question the use of Marathi at home.

**Connecting with own ethnic community in Australia (integrative-affective motivation)**

All Marathi parents perceive MHLS as a platform to connect with fellow community members. Parents can easily network with many community members in one place, which is otherwise time-consuming. Mrs Chonkar (age 35) says,

We feel homely at the MHLS. When we had newly arrived in Australia, we used to look forward to attending school on Saturdays. Now we have Marathi acquaintances and friends in Melbourne. Our social life has widened, and at the same time, children are learning our language and culture. (Interview in Marathi, 18/08/2018)

Several studies have shown that HLSs provide language access and resources for children, extend social networks and include participants in their ethnic community (Li, 2006). The MHLS is no exception. Most parents mentioned feeling accepted and connected with the cohort at MHLS due to their common first language, cultural values and similar child-rearing practices.



## Motivation among Japanese parents

Japanese parents consider HL schooling essential for their young children for the following reasons:

### Giving children more opportunities through bilingualism (instrumental motivation)

All Japanese interviewees agreed on the advantages of bilingualism in education and career. Japanese language education at a young age creates a solid foundation and brings children closer to their future goals. All the Japanese parents believed that offering HL schooling opportunities to their children is a parent's responsibility. Mrs Harada (age 45), who has an Australian husband and whose older son attends the school, points out:

Learning a second language is very important. Child's world widens as he gets the depth of the second language. Obviously, my son will have a better future if he speaks English and Japanese well. I send him to JHLS to master the language and culture. (Interview in Japanese, 12/10/2019)

### Having an advantage in the VCE exam (instrumental motivation)

In Victoria, students can take Japanese as a year 12 VCE subject and receive bonus points for studying LOTE, giving them the edge they need to enter their tertiary course of choice (University-Languages-Portal-Australia, 2015). Most Japanese participants, except for Mrs Nakaguchi and two senior parents (of JHLS graduates), did not recognise this advantage as their children are young and parents are unaware of the education system in Australia. Mrs Nakaguchi (age 47), whose daughter is only six, has realistic expectations of JHLS:

I know even at the JHLS, there are classes for VCE-level Japanese. I have yet to find out the details. I want my daughter to continue learning Japanese till VCE. (Interviewed in Japanese, 14/9/2019)

### Having a smooth transition into the Japanese education system (instrumental motivation)

JHLS uses the same language and math curriculum for children as in Japan, following the Japanese government's policy to educate overseas Japanese citizen's children and provide them with the same education they would have received in Japan. The parents are incredibly supportive of JHLS as they recognise the school's unique contribution in this way. This is one of the reasons why some parents prefer JHLS over the VSL for their children. Mrs Hara (age 44), who has tentative plans to return to Japan in a few years, says:

My husband is Japanese. We do not have fixed plans, but there are high chances that we will return to look after our ageing parents. We wanted our children to have a good base of Japanese, so we chose the JHLS as they use textbooks developed by the Japanese government. VSL does not use the Japanese governments' books. (Interview in Japanese, 14/9/2019)

### Raising successful children (integrative-affective motivation)

Some parents think the school is crucial in raising well-rounded children. Well-mannered and well-learned children eventually increase their academic performance. Studies show that parents of all ethnic and educational backgrounds have high educational aspirations for their children (Spera et al., 2009). Parents at the JHLS are no exception. Mrs Hayashi (age 39), who has an Anglo husband and a younger brother living in Australia, says:

My younger brother is the most influential in my decision to send my son to the JHLS. His Japanese wife and her Japanese friends attended this JHLS while growing up in Melbourne. All of them have excelled academically. But most importantly, they are good human beings with a

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

great understanding of Japanese culture and values. So, I did not think twice while enrolling my son at the JHLS. (Interview in Japanese, 14/9/2019)

**Giving children an opportunity to experience real Japanese school life (integrative-affective motivation)**

The Japanese mothers acknowledged that the ‘mainstream school life’ their children experience in Australia differs from ‘real Japanese school life’. Schools in Japan tend to be highly organised but fun at the same time. They emphasise community responsibility and group activities. All the Japanese parents repeated that studying at this JHLS gives their children an excellent opportunity to experience authentic Japanese school life. Mrs Hayashi (age 39), whose son has recently started attending the school, says:

I was happy to see the opening ceremony (*Shigyoushiki*). It was very Japanese. And then I felt very nostalgic. You must attend the JHLS to experience the typical Japanese events such as the morning assembly (*Asa no kai*) and sports day (*Undou kai*) in Australia. (Interview in Japanese, 14/9/2019)

Parents prefer the JHLS over VSL, as the children can learn Japanese values and language while experiencing genuine and hands-on Japanese school life from native Japanese teachers. Mrs Sakai (age 39), whose daughter is in grade 1, notes:

VSL also teaches Japanese language. But JHLS is kind of a school. VSL is more like language classes. (Interview in Japanese, 12/10/2019)

**Maintaining the Japanese language through group interactions (integrative-affective motivation)**

Some Japanese parents thought that the JHLS creates a space for group learning through interactions, allowing students to shape their complex cultural identities in the company of other multilingual children. The school permits the children to use Japanese with their peers and teachers. This factor is crucial for these children growing up in Melbourne who use mainly English outside the home environment. A senior Japanese parent, 61-year-old Mrs Ogawa, a qualified Japanese language teacher herself, says:

I could teach Japanese at home, as I am a Japanese teacher. However, it has other drawbacks. Learning in a classroom set-up, right from the morning, starting your lesson with a ‘good morning’ (*Ohayougozaimasu*) is different and more motivating. When you learn in the company of others, you sense the joy of learning. In this regard, sending them to the JHLS was a good decision I made for my children. (Interview in Japanese, 21/02/2020)

**Learning typical Japanese culture, values and life skills from native Japanese teachers (integrative-affective motivation)**

Some parents believed that multicultural awareness and its critical reflection (Banks, 2004) are JHLS teachers’ important qualities. The Japanese teachers are culturally competent and perceive Japanese culture and values as a fundamental element of the teaching and learning process while being aware of cultural diversity in their classroom. Mrs Sakai (age 41), the wife of a man from Hong Kong whose daughter attends the school, says:

While replicating the typical Japanese atmosphere at the school, the teachers carefully balance Japanese and Western cultures. The teachers live in Australia and have their children attending the JHLS. So, the teachers understand our children’s challenges and the difficulties we face as parents. (Interview in Japanese, 12/10/2019)

All the parents in my interviews noted that the school teaches and emphasises Japanese language and cultural values through mundane tasks. This early education helps the children develop their views, cultural practices, awareness and identity later in life.

### **Having a permanent language partner to speak to in Japanese (integrative-affective motivation)**

More than half of the Japanese parents lack fluency in English and have a non-Japanese spouse who lacks Japanese proficiency. This situation compels parents to search for a permanent language partner with whom they can interact freely in Japanese. Mrs Hayashi (age 39), who has an Australian husband and whose son attends the school, firmly says:

The most important reason I want my children to attend the school and learn Japanese is that I want them to share the same language and culture to which I belong. I also tell my children that if they do not speak Japanese, no one in the family can speak Mama's language. So, she will be lonely. (Interview in Japanese, 14/09/2019)

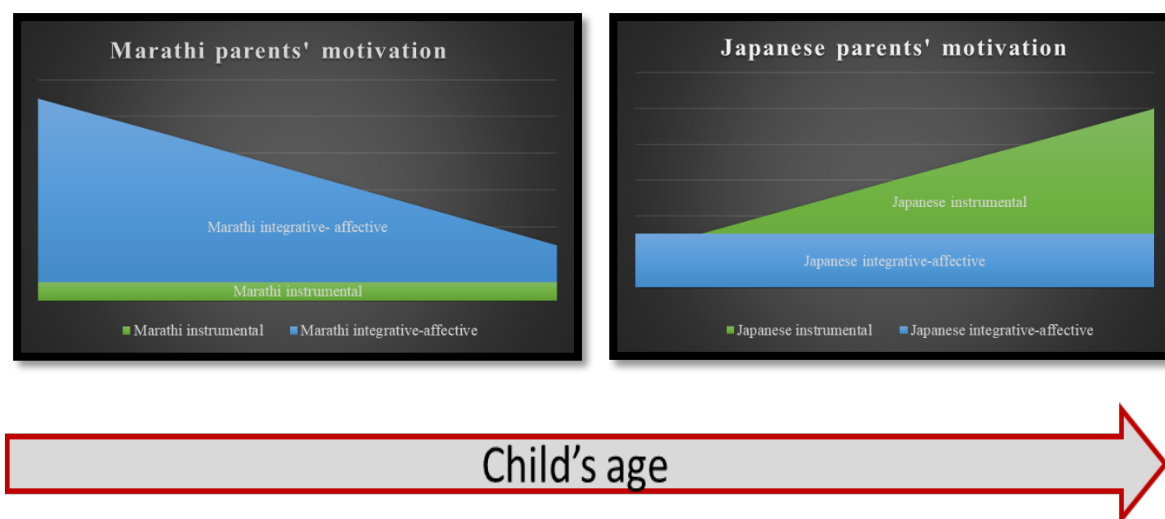
## **DISCUSSION: PARENTAL MOTIVATION CONTINUUM**

The goal of interviewing the parents was to tease apart the role of parental motivations in HL schooling. This study uncovered a more complex picture of parental motivations. I had expected a significant difference in parental motivation between Marathi and Japanese parents in sending their young children to HLS because of the different relative status of languages (Marathi is truly the less commonly taught language, and Japanese is the third most popular LOTE in Victoria) and the different parental backgrounds. I anticipated that Japanese parents would pursue the instrumental value considering the benefits of Japanese language proficiency in formal schooling, career (university entry scores) and the global labour market. I use the term 'instrumental motivation' for external pragmatic factors. I share Gardner's historical viewpoint of integrative orientation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972), where the HLL's parents desire for themselves and their children to be part of a target language group. I use 'integrative-affective' motivation rather than simply 'integrative' motivation as advocated by (Gardner, 2007; Gardner & Lambert, 1972) to stress the affinity and emotional attachment of the parents to their respective language and heritage.

Most Marathi and Japanese parents' motivations for sending children to HLSs were integrative-affective. In other words, Marathi parents prioritised the integrative-affective side of HL schooling, such as preserving the Marathi language, maintaining children's identity as Marathi, teaching discipline to children, connecting with grandparents, gaining social pride in their ethnic community, having a parental say and connecting with their own ethnic community in Australia. Japanese parents also predominantly exhibited integrative-affective aspects such as giving children an opportunity to experience real Japanese school life, maintaining the Japanese language through group interactions, teaching typical Japanese culture, values and life skills and having a permanent language partner to speak to in Japanese. There were some instrumental motivations among the Japanese parents, such as having an advantage in the VCE exam, having a smooth transition in the Japanese education system in return and giving children more opportunities through bilingualism. This finding was similar to results in other studies (see Lu & Li, 2008; Wen, 2011), where Chinese learners were instrumentally motivated. The only instrumental motivation among the Marathi parents was the future relocation to India. The consensual display of emotional, affective and psychological facets outweighed the material benefits of attending HL schooling among Marathi and Japanese parents.

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

I propose that parental motivation is not a mutually exclusive binary state with instrumental on one side and integrative-affective on the other. Instead, parental motivation exists on a continuum between the two categories. Different aspects of parents' motivations can be located as purely instrumental, or purely integrative-affective or both to some degree. Every motivation falls at a certain point on the continuum. The findings suggest that Marathi and Japanese parents' motivation for sending their children to HL schooling is predominantly integrative-affective rather than instrumental in the early childhood phase, contrary to my expectations.



**Figure 1: Motivation continuum, instrumental and integrative-affective among parents**

Figure 1 is a schematisation of the Marathi and Japanese parents' instrumental and integrative-affective HL motivations. Only two Marathi parents displayed instrumental motivation. All Marathi parents exhibited powerful integrative-affective motivations when the parents had recently migrated, and when the children were young. They want to form networks among the Marathi community, teach Marathi to children to maintain family bonds with grandparents in India, use the Marathi language, celebrate Marathi festivals and engage with the Marathi community in Melbourne. The Marathi parents know that HL education will not benefit their children instrumentally in Australian society in terms of career and educational 'success'. As a result, when children get older and engage more in regular academic activities, they stop attending the MHLS.

Unlike Marathi parents, Japanese parents' integrative-affective motivation did not change over a period of time. However, instrumental motivation among Japanese parents increased as the children grew. Japanese parents had the highest instrumental motivation when their children were in year 12 because the children received bonus scores for studying the Japanese language. Despite belonging to two very different language groups, Marathi and Japanese parents demonstrated strong integrative-affective motivation and desired children's HL retention and unique cultural development through systematic exposure to HL education while growing up in Australian society. In terms of identity formation, both Marathi and Japanese parents wanted their children to construct their identities as Marathi Australians and Japanese Australians, which demonstrated that parents' HL schooling motivation was aligned with their prioritisation of linguistic and cultural growth rather than high academic and career aspirations. Integrative

motivation has thus proven to be a powerful motivation in this study as well as in many earlier studies (Titus, 2018; Xu and Moloney, 2019), reflecting the fact that the parents in this study have a personal affection to their language and culture which they want to pass on to their children.

## CONCLUSION

The comparison of a language with high perceived value (Japanese) and that with low perceived value (Marathi) in Australian society was not in the field of HL before. The findings from this study showed, first, that parents need to have a positive and affective attitude towards their language and culture regardless of the language's perceived value, leading to HL schooling of young children and effective HL maintenance. Second, the comparison enabled us to illuminate that parents' integrative-affective motivation is more important than the instrumental motivation for a globally popular language like Japanese or a 'truly less commonly taught language' like Marathi. During the early years, when children cannot decide for themselves, the integratively and affectively motivated parents are their decision-makers. For all Marathi and Japanese parents of young children, parental satisfaction is the foremost reason for sending children to HLS. Parents feel emotionally satisfied when second-generation children growing up in Melbourne learn and practise their HL in a formal setting. Secondly, parents want to transmit their respective languages to their children and maintain linguistic and cultural ties to their homeland. Third, parents obtain a platform to interact with other parents from their community who share common values and experiences. Fourth, Japanese parents believe that learning HL will give the students an advantage when attending a local school should the family return to the home country. Japanese parents also acknowledge the benefits of bilingualism in their children's careers. However, most Japanese parents of young children were unaware of the advantage of learning Japanese in the Victorian education system, including the bonus score children obtain for studying Japanese at the year 12 VCE level.

We can effectively understand parental motivation in sending young children to HLS by conceiving motivation as being located on the continuum between 'instrumental' and 'integrative-affective' rather than being in a binary state. The continuum also allows us to understand that as children grow, parental motivation may shift on the continuum.

This study contributes to the existing literature on HL learning in several ways. The study produced comparative narratives of HL schooling constructed by parents in conversation with me as a researcher. The analysis generated in-depth insight into parents' perspectives and experiences of children's HL schooling experiences in Melbourne for a marginal language, Marathi, and a popular language, Japanese. Further, I extended the application of the socio-psychological concept of motivation (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) and proposed a motivation continuum for parents. This research shows that motivation is not binary and falls on a continuum. Finally, I demonstrated that parents of a truly less commonly taught language and a globally popular language possess strong integrative-affective motivation leading to the schooling of young HLLs.

This paper intends to provide valuable information to migrant families, educators, researchers, policymakers and others interested in maintaining HL in Melbourne and beyond. The study confirms the significance of HLSs in language education provision in Victoria. HLSs are the preferred parental choice over VSL and mainstream schools for their young children. I do not claim that the Japanese and Marathi parents' experiences represent all parents' experiences; however, they may indicate common motivational trends among HLLs' parents. This paper

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

provides the impetus for future studies further to explore parental motivations around language learning for their children.

## REFERENCES

- ABS. (2021). *Australia's population by country of birth*. Retrieved from <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/australias-population-country-birth/latest-release>
- ANJCL. (2023). Australian Network for Japanese as Community Language Retrieved from <https://sites.google.com/view/anjcl-j/home>
- Archakis, A. (2014). Immigrant voices in students' essay texts: Between assimilation and pride. *Discourse Society*, 25, 297–314.
- Banks, J. (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. Macmillan.
- Benson, M., & O'Reilly, K. (2009). Migration and the search for a better way of life: A critical exploration of lifestyle migration. *The Sociological Review*, 57(4), 608–625.
- BMM. (2018). *BMM Marathi Shala*. Retrieved from <https://www.bmmshala.net/History>
- Bondarenko, A.V. (2015). The role of motivation and cultural background in language acquisition in the bilingual child: Case study of Russian heritage speaker. *The International Journal of Communication and Linguistic Studies*, 13(3), 49–60. <https://doi.org/10.18848/2327-7882/CGP/v13i03/43653>
- Chinen, K., & Tucker, G. R. (2005). Heritage language development: Understanding the roles of ethnic identity and Saturday school participation. *Heritage Language Journal*, 3(1), 27–59.
- Choudhury, R. (2013). Raising bilingual and bicultural Bangladeshi-American children in New York City: Perspectives from educators and parents in a Bengali Community Program. In O. García, Z. Zakharia, & B. Otcu (Eds.), *Bilingual community education and multilingualism: Beyond heritage languages in a global city* (pp. 60–73). Multilingual Matters.
- Clyne, M. (1991). *Community languages: The Australian experience*. Cambridge University Press.
- COAG. (1994). Asian Languages and Australia's economic future: A report prepared for the Council of Australian Governments on a proposed national Asian Languages/Studies strategy for Australian schools. Queensland Government Printer.
- Community–Languages–Victoria. (2022). *Community Languages Victoria Incorporated Where language and culture come together*. Retrieved from <http://www.communitylanguages.org.au/CLS-List.php>
- Creese, A., & Blackledge, A. (2010). Translanguaging in the bilingual classroom: A pedagogy for learning and teaching? *The Modern Language Journal*, 94(10), 103–115.
- Cummins, J. (2014). To what extent are Canadian second language policies evidence-based? Reflections on the intersections of research and policy. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 5, 1–10.

- Danjo, C., & Moreh, C. (2020). Complementary schools in the global age: A multi-level critical analysis of discourses and practices at Japanese Hoshuko in the UK. *Linguistics and Education, 60*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2020.100870>
- Doerr, N.M., & Lee, K. (2009). Contesting heritage: Language, legitimacy, and schooling at a weekend Japanese-language school in the United States. *Language and Education, 23*(5), 425–441.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Motivational strategies in the language classroom*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2009). The L2 Motivational Self System. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 9–42). Multilingual Matters.
- Eisenlohr, P. (2004). Temporalities of community: Ancestral language, pilgrimage, and diasporic belonging in Mauritius. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 14*(1), 81–98.
- Extra, G., & Yagmur, K. (2002). *Language diversity in multicultural Europe: Comparative perspectives on immigrant minority languages at home and at school*. Management of Social Transformations (MOST) 63. UNESCO.
- Fishman, J. (2001). 300-plus years of heritage language education in the United States. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard, & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage languages in America. Preserving a national resource* (pp. 81–97). Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Gambhir, S. (2001). Truly less commonly taught languages and heritage language learners in the United States. In J. K. Peyton, D. A. Ranard, & S. McGinnis (Eds.), *Heritage language students: Profiles and possibilities* (pp. 207–228). ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics.
- Gardner, R.C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R.C. (2007). Motivation and second language acquisition. *Porta linguarum, 8*, 9–20.
- Gardner, R. C. (2010). *Motivation and second language acquisition: The socio-educational model* (Vol. 10). Peter Lang.
- Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1959). Motivational variables in second-language acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology, 13*(4), 266–272.
- Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Newbury House.
- Ghaffar-Kucher, A., & Mahajan, A.P. (2012). Salaam! Namaste!: Indian and Pakistani community-based efforts towards mother tongue language maintenance. In G. Ofelia, Z. Zeena, & O. Bahar (Eds.), *Bilingual community education and multilingualism* (pp. 74–86). Multilingual Matters.
- Goodman, R. (2003). The changing perception and status of Japan's returnee children (*kikokushijo*). In R. Goodman, C. Peach, A. Takenaka, & P. White (Eds.), *Global Japan* (pp. 189–206): Routledge.

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

- Hashimoto, K., & Lee, J.S. (2011). Heritage-language literacy practices: A case study of three Japanese American families. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 34(2), 161–184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2011.597821>
- Hornberger, N. H., & Wang, S. C. (2008). Who are our heritage language learners? Identity and biliteracy in heritage language education in the United States. In D. M. Brinton, O. Kagan, & S. Bauckus (Eds.), *Heritage language education: A new field emerging* (pp. 3–36). Routledge.
- JPF-Sydney. (2023). Japan-related community organisations in Australia and New Zealand. Retrieved from <https://jpf.org.au/japan-related-community-organisations-in-australia/>
- Kawasaki, K. (2014). A place for second generation Japanese speaking children in Perth: Can they maintain Japanese as a community language? In Katie Dunworth & G. Zhang (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on language education: Australia and the Asia Pacific* (pp. 163–187). Springer International Publishing.
- Koshiha, K. (2020). Between inheritance and commodity: The discourse of Japanese ethnolinguistic identity among youths in a heritage language class in Australia. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1795861>
- Li, G. (2006). The role of parents in heritage language maintenance and development. In K. Kondo-Brown (Ed.), *Heritage language development: Focus on East Asian immigrants* (pp. 15–31). John Benjamins Pub.
- Liddicoat, A.J. (2017). Indigenous and immigrant languages in Australia. In S. Shah & C. Seals (Eds.), *Heritage language policies around the world* (pp. 237–253). Routledge.
- Lu, X., & Li, G. (2008). Motivation and achievement in Chinese language learning: A comparative analysis. In A. W. He & Y. Xiao (Eds.), *Chinese as a heritage language: Fostering rooted world citizenry* (pp. 89–108). University of Hawaii, National Foreign Language Resource Center.
- Montrul, S. (2010). How similar are L2 learners and heritage speakers? Spanish clitics and word order. *Applied PsychoLinguistics*, 31, 167–207.
- Montrul, S. (2016). *The acquisition of heritage languages*. Cambridge University Press.
- Mu, G.M. (2014). Learning Chinese as a heritage language in Australia and beyond: The role of capital. *Language and Education*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.908905>
- Nordstrom, J. (2016). Parents' reasons for community language schools: Insight from a high-shift, non-visible, middle-class community. *Language and Education*, 30(6), 519–535. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2016.1168431>
- Okano, K. (2013). Ethnic schools and multiculturalism in Japan. In G. DeCoker & C. Bjork (Eds.), *Japanese education in an era of globalization* (pp. 85–95). Teachers College Press.
- Oriyama, K. (2010). Heritage language maintenance and Japanese identity formation: What role can schooling and ethnic community contact play? *Heritage Language Journal*, 7(2), 76–111.



- Oriyama, K. (2012). What role can community contact play in heritage language literacy development? Japanese–English bilingual children in Sydney. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 33(2), 167–186.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2011.617822>
- Peng, C. F. (2023). Relationship between attitude, learning orientation, motivation, and proficiency degree of the Chinese language among trainee teachers. *Acta Linguistica Asiatica*, 13(1), 53–71. <https://doi.org/10.4312/ala.13.1.53-71>
- Polinsky, M., & Kagan, O. (2007). Heritage languages: In the 'wild' and in the classroom. *Language and Linguistics Compass*, 1(5), 368–395.
- Rosiak, K. (2023). The role of language attitudes and ideologies in minority language learning motivation. *European journal of applied linguistics*, 11(1), 26–52.  
<https://doi.org/10.1515/eujal-2021-0018>
- Spera, C., et al. (2009). Parental aspirations for their children’s educational attainment: Relations to ethnicity, parental education, children’s academic performance, and parental perceptions of school climate. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 38, 1140–1152.
- State-of-Victoria-DET. (2021). *Languages provision in Victorian Government Schools, 2020*.
- Takei, N. (2020). Meaning-making process of ethnicity: A case of Japanese mixed heritage youth. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 20(4), 225–238.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2020.1753195>
- Takeuchi, M. (2006). The Japanese language development of children through the 'one parent one language' approach in Melbourne. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 27(4), 319–331.
- Titus, J. (2018). Russian heritage learners’ goals and motivation. In P. P. Trifonas & T. Aravossitas (Eds.), *Handbook of research and practice in heritage language education* (pp. 149–164). Springer.
- Tsushima, R., & Guardado, M. (2019). “Rules. . . I want someone to make them clear”: Japanese mothers in Montreal talk about multilingual parenting. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 18(5), 311–328
- University-Languages-Portal-Australia. (2015). Why study languages. Retrieved from <https://ulpa.edu.au/why-study-languages/>
- Wen, X. (2011). Chinese language learning motivation: A comparative study of heritage and non-heritage learners. *Heritage Language Journal*, 8(3), 41–66.
- Wiley, T. (2005). The re-emergence of heritage and community language policy in the U.S. national spotlight. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89(4), 594–601.
- Willoughby, L. (2018). The Victorian School of Languages as a model for heritage language education. In P. P. Trifonas & T. Aravossitas (Eds.), *Handbook of research and practice in heritage language education* (pp. 417–430). Springer.
- Xu, H.L., & Moloney, R. (2014). Identifying Chinese heritage learners’ motivations, learning needs and learning goals: A case study of a cohort of heritage learners in an Australian University. *Language Learning in Higher Education*, 4(2), 365–393.

*Parental motivations and heritage language schooling:  
A study of Japanese and Marathi parents*

Xu, H.L., & Moloney, R. (2017). Moving between diverse cultural contexts: How important is intercultural learning to Chinese heritage language learners? In T. Jin & F. Dervin (Eds.), *Interculturality in Chinese language education* (pp. 151–176). Palgrave Macmillan.

Xu, H. L., & Moloney, R. (2019). Motivation for learning Chinese in the Australian context: A research focus on tertiary students. In M. Lamb, K. Csizér, A. Henry, & S. Ryan (Eds.), *The Palgrave handbook of motivation for language learning* (pp. 449–469). Palgrave Macmillan.

文部科学省-Monbukagakusho. (2016). 在外教育施設の概要. Retrieved from [https://www.mext.go.jp/a\\_menu/shotou/clarinet/002/002.htm](https://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/clarinet/002/002.htm)



This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonDerivatives 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/4.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, PO Box 1866, Mountain View, CA 94042, USA.

Authors and readers are free to copy, display and distribute this article with no changes, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and the International Education Journal: Comparative Perspectives (IEJ: CP), and the same license applies. More details of this Creative Commons license are available at. The IEJ: CP is published by the Oceania Comparative and International Education Society (formerly ANZCIES) and Sydney Open Access Journals at the University of Sydney. Articles are indexed in ERIC, Scimago Journal (SJR)Ranking / SCOPUS. The IEJ:CP is a member of the Free Journal Network: Join the IEJ: CP and OCIES Facebook community at Oceania Comparative and International Education Society, and Twitter: @OceaniaCIES