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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Navigating and Reconfiguring the “Multi” In Languages And Identities – Six *Chaoxianzu* [Ethnic Korean Chinese] Teenagers in Beijing

Meilan Piao Ehlert<sup>1</sup> & Danièle Moore<sup>2</sup>

*Simon Fraser University, Vancouver (Canada) and \*Diltec, Université Paris 3 – Sorbonne Nouvelle (France)*

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This contribution reports on a qualitative study conducted with six multilingual *ChaoXianZu* [ethnic Korean Chinese] teenagers in Beijing China, to explore how adolescents engage and invest in multiple representations of languages and identities (Byrd Clark, 2009; 2012), in a context of ever-changing and increased transnational and intraterritorial mobility. In this article, the researchers employ the framework of plurilingualism and plurilingual competence to analyse how the participants conceptualise and talk about their linguistic practices, social networks, language learning, and bilingual minority education in China. The data presented suggest that while participants do adopt, and adapt to, their parents' expectations to maintain strong ties with their own language and community and with Chinese ideals, the six youth interviewed also resist essentialized and normative representations of Chinese Koreanness to invest in more complex, fluid and overlapping multiple (learners') identities.

**Keywords:** Plurilingual competence, multilingual learners identities, learners identities, translanguaging practices, *ChaoXianZu*, ethnic Korean youth in China.

모션중의 복합언어 학습자들: 언어 및 아이덴티티의 “멀티” 성에 관한 탐색과 재정립 — 여섯명의 북경거주 중국조선족 십대 청소년들

**[요지]** 본문은 변화무쌍한 국제 및 지역 간의 유동성이 나날이 증가되고 있는 현황에서, 여러가지 언어를 사용하는 북경거주 십대 청소년 여섯명이 다양한 언어와 아이덴티티(정체성) 투자에 어떻게 열중 (Byrd Clark, 2009; 2012) 하고 있는가에 대한 보고이다. 본 연구자들은 복합언어론과 복합언어능력에 관한

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<sup>1</sup> Email: [meilane@sfu.ca](mailto:meilane@sfu.ca)

<sup>2</sup> Email: [dmoore@sfu.ca](mailto:dmoore@sfu.ca)

프레임워크를 도입하여 이 참가자들이 자신들의 언어활동, 사회적 네트워크, 언어습득 및 중국에 있어서의 바이링글 소수민족 교육에 대해 어떻게 개념화하고 이야기하는지에 대해 분석 해보았다. 본론의 데이터는 여섯명의 청소년들은 본 민족언어와 커뮤니티와의 깊은 유대 관계를 지속하기를 원하는 부모세대의 기대를 존중하고 부응하고자 노력하는 동시에, 그들이 전형적인 중국조선족다운 (**Chinese Koreanness**) 이미지 표현(**Representation**)에 대해 저항하면서 더욱 복잡하고 유체적이고 중복성이 있는 다양한 (학생)아이덴티티에 투자하고 있음을 제시하고 있다.

**[키워드]** 복합언어능력, 다중언어사용자들의 아이덴티티, 학습자들의 아이덴티티, 트랜스링글 행동/사례 [**translingual practices**], 조선족, 중국조선족 청소년들

## Introduction

The 2010 national census shows that the Han population, the majority group in China, makes up close to 92% of the total population, while China's officially recognized minorities constitute 8.4% of the population. As shown in the census, almost 2 million Koreans currently reside in China as citizens of the People's Republic. The history of Koreans in China is a long one. Korean migration to and within China dates back from as early as the Ming and Qing Dynasties, with a spur from the 1860s due to natural disasters, drastic economic conditions and political turmoil (Kwon, 1997). Traditionally, Koreans have lived in close-knit communities, with their own educational system (Choi, 2001). They have achieved a high level of language and cultural maintenance, while identifying politically with China as "their country" (Choi, 2001: 127), thus achieving the status of a "model minority" (Fang, 2009; Gao, 2008) with high educational aspirations. In the past decade, Beijing has been undergoing tremendous transformations, experiencing large-scale social change, growth of economy, and intensified globalization (Zhengrong, Lei & Deqiang, 2013). This shift is visible in the city currently ranking 15<sup>th</sup>, right after Toronto, in the Global Cities Index (12<sup>th</sup> in 2008), the second city in China after Hong-Kong (ranked 5<sup>th</sup>). It is also ranked as the 6<sup>th</sup> city in business activity (from 9<sup>th</sup> in 2008) (A.T. Kearney, 2010). This index, which ranks 65 cities across the world, uses five dimensions to measure globalization, defined as "the ability to attract, retain and generate global capital, people and ideas" (A.T. Kearney, 2010: 5). This shift has had profound impact on Koreans' mobility, within and across borders, and has offered more opportunities for interconnectedness (Hannerz, 1996), whether virtual or physical. Particularly since the early 1990s, the ChaoXianZu have been taking more frequent trips to visit their relatives in South Korea, while South Koreans have invested more in China, sometimes also-moving to big cities in China for business and education (Kwon, 1997; Kim, 2003). Local communities have likewise been more in touch with the international Korean diaspora, in the United States and elsewhere in the world (Bergsten & Choi, 2003). Despite their geopolitical importance in China, the patterns of change in the make-up of the ChaoXianZu, whether due to their new intraterritorial mobilities and/or transnational links (Colin, 2003), are still very rarely a topic of study, notably from the perspective of multilingual studies and language planning in education.

Within this context of social transformation (Mackerras, 2003), the study aims to investigate the experiences of a group of under-researched youth, who self-identify as

*ChaoXianZu* [ethnic Korean Chinese], and were born and grew up in the North of China before moving to Beijing to continue their studies. Drawing on in-depth individual and group interviews with six focus adolescents who participated in a four-year ethnographic study, the paper documents 1) their experiences and understandings of multilingualism, the range of language and literacy practices available to them, and how and why they value (or not) Korean and bilingual education as assets within the larger context of being a Korean Chinese in Beijing. The paper also discusses 2) how increased mobilities (virtual and real) affect representations of multiple language learning and self, and 3) how these youth appropriate multilingualism as a strategic tool to resist ascribed, static and essentialized dual superordinate identities, and adopt more flexible, dynamic and interwoven multiple identities, including multilingual learners' identities. The paper adopts an emic perspective, which "acknowledges the views and opinions of participants" (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 25), to examine how the framework of plurilingualism and the concepts of plurilingual and pluricultural competence could help translate the dynamic and unfixed nature of the multiple language and identity constructions experienced by individuals, and open better windows for understanding the diversity of learners, their mobile resources, and the links between home and institution language usage and learning expectations. As such, the study should inform policy makers and language educators committed to improve the learning experiences of young people and support and build on their multilingual practices and literacies in a globalized world.

### **The Context: The *ChaoXianZu* in China**

The *ChaoXianZu* [중국조선족, 中国朝鲜族] [ethnic Korean Chinese; or ethnic Koreans in China] is one of the five *Type 1* ethnic minority groups (note 1) which enjoyed bilingual education in Korean and Chinese before the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, a multilingual and multicultural nation that is home to 55 official ethnic minority groups (with approximately 105 million people, or 8.4% of China's total population). (2010 Census) Of the five *Type 1* ethnic groups, the *ChaoXianZu* community is considered to be well established, and to have maintained its language and culture, notably thanks to the bilingual education system and publicly funded ethnic minority schools (Beckett & Postiglione, 2011; Postiglione, 2009; Tai, 2004; Zhou & Hill, 2009). *ChaoXianZu* schools generally allow students to study three languages: Korean, *HanYu* (*Putonghua* or Mandarin Chinese, the *Lingua Franca* between various ethnic groups in China) (note 2), plus a foreign language (usually English or Japanese).

Under the "positive policies for ethnic minority education", the PRC was implementing the Soviet model of multinational state-building (Zhou & Hill, 2009: 9) until the early 1990s. While supporting the preservation of traditional ethnic culture and language in the school system, the main goal of these "positive policies" was to use the power of nation-wide public education system as an essential wheel for the training of ethnic minority group leaders to become effective bilinguals in order to contribute in supporting China's nationalism for the prosperous development of the *Zhong-hua Min-zu* [the great Chinese race] (note 3). Changes in political, social and economic policies in the early 1980s, however, also brought changes to the education policies for ethnic

minorities, with a shift from the Soviet model of *Duo-yuan Yi-ti* [multiple dimensions under one system] approach to a contemporary model of *Zhong-hua Min-zu Duo-yuan Yi-ti* [“the Chinese nation with diversity”] (Zhou, 2009; Zhou & Hill, 2009). This policy of accommodation is based on pluralistic legislation that protects minorities and minority language rights in China, within a general framework of national convergence, and

[the] concept of diversity in unity of the Chinese nation [that] assumes that the two levels of identities do not replace each other nor contradict each other, but coexist and co-develop with linguistic and cultural diversity. (Zhou, 2012: 26)

In particular, the *Zhong-Han JianJiao* [establishment of the official diplomatic relationship between China and *Han Guo*] in October 1997 provided more opportunities to the *ChaoXianZu* people in terms of employment and international labour immigration, including the opportunities working in *Han Guo*, their ancestors’ land in the southern part of the Korean peninsula.

Rapid industrialization and the ease of *HuKou* [户口, a residential status restriction system in the PRC] motivated domestic migration, which triggered a wave of migration in the *ChaoXianZu* community. A large number of ethnic Koreans left their traditional territories in *Dong Bei* [the northeast] China, where they have been residing since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and im-/migrated to larger cities and more industrialized east coastal areas, as well as to *Han Guo* or more developed nations, for better economic and other opportunities. These changes have transformed the lives of Korean minorities in China in many ways, allowing for increased mobility and more flexibility in education (Feng, 2007; Ma, 2011; Zhou, 2004; Zhou & Hill, 2011). Consequently, many minority groups migrated from local cities to live in the capital city of Beijing, thus leading to a new *ChaoXianZu* diaspora. With approx. 37,000 members in 2010, this comparatively new community represents the most important minority group growth in Beijing, where, according to the 2010 census, over 801,000 *Shaoshu Minzu* [ethnic minority] people lived (or 4.1% of the entire city population, a growth of 36.8% of the population compared to the 2000 census). Today, Korean minorities are still living in the *Dongbei San-sheng*, China’s three Northeast provinces: Jilin, Liaoning and Heilongjiang. Before the major innovative reform era at the end of the 1980s, the majority (over 98%) of the Korean population in China was concentrated in this region.

Although we do not adhere to essentialist definitions of ethnicity and claims to cultural difference they usually entail, and understand ethnicity as a “boundary-making social and symbolic construct” and a principle of politicized social organization that tangles “institutional incentives, differences in power, and pre-existing social networks” (Wimmer, 2013, p. 2), we adopt in this paper the point of view of our participants who self-identify as *ChaoXianZu* [중국조선족, 中国朝鲜族] [ethnic Korean Chinese] and/or *Shaoshu Minzu* [namely, peoples with small populations compared to the Han majority]. Translations are delicate. *Minzu* can also mean in Mandarin ‘nationality’, or ‘race,’ as well as ‘ethnic group’ (for more details, see Zhou & Hill, 2009: 3-5). For our participants, ethnicity (or nationality) matters because it structures state allocation of resources (notably the existence of bilingual schools, or ‘ethnic’ schools, to preserve Korean), and binds a closely-held sense of identity and belonging, anchored in a common history and

memory that transcends their differences. Zheng (1999) describes how they obtained an official status as a “minority nationality”, in acknowledgement of their fighting for freedom against foreign invasions during the process of establishing the People’s Republic of China:

이런 역사과정에서 중국의 조선족은 점차 중국을 자기 삶의 유일한 고향으로 여기게 되었고 또 자기의 운명을 함께 놓고 생각하게 되었다. 이리하여 중국에 있어서 하나의 민족으로 되었으며 자기를 재중조선교민, 재중한인이라고 하지않고 중국조선족이라고 한다. (정관룡, 1999: 302-303)

Through this historical process, these Koreans gradually considered China as their homeland, and address themselves as the ChaoXianZu in China [중국조선족, 中国朝鲜族], instead of North Korean Residents in China [재중조선교민, 在中朝鲜侨民] or the HanGuo-Ren in China [재중한인, 在中韩人]. (Zheng, 1999: 302-303, our translation from Korean)

### **Plurilingualism, Plurilingual Competence, and Multiple (Learners’) Identities**

In this paper, we adopt a theoretical conceptualisation of plurilingualism in the study of individuals’ repertoires and agency in several languages, based on a wholistic definition of the repertoire as one (Grosjean, 2008) with features that have been socially constructed as belonging to separate languages (Calvet, 2006), and a dynamic understanding of competence in multiple languages (Moore & Gajo, 2009: 139), in which “each individual currently practicing two (or more) languages, and able, where necessary, to switch from one language to the other without major difficulty, is bilingual (or plurilingual); by contrast, the distance between languages, the method of acquisition and the degree of symmetry between the two levels of competence, can vary considerably” (Lüdi & Py, 2009: 158). In this view, plurilingual individual’s competences are not perfect by definition (Lüdi & Py, 2009). They vary in different contexts and situations, and are dependent on biographic circumstances, which play important roles in the learning process and the development of identity:

[Plurilingualism] highlights social representations, reflexivity (in the sociological sense: i.e. individuals monitoring situations and norms as part of their interactional strategies), and awareness of bi/plurilingualism as central to the process of language learning and to the development of multiple identities. (Moore & Gajo, 2009: 138)

As previously defined, the framework of plurilingualism and the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence (PPC) offer more complex and dynamic conceptions and understandings of competence in multiple languages, and give a greater attention to the speaker’s voice and self-determination, and to possibilities of empowerment and resistance through differentiated language use, choices and actions (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). As such, language practices intertwine socio-political institutionalisations and social awareness (Calvet, 2006), social representations and expectations (Moore & Py, 2011), intentionality (Canagarajah, 2013a) and agency (Giddens, 1991).

For Coste, Moore & Zarate (2009: 22), the specific nature of the concept of plurilingual and pluricultural competence is defined by a complex intermeshing of socio-linguistic representations and language practices that can be construed around three key aspects affecting learning and cognitive trajectories:

- its inclusion in a particular family and occupational path, which implies a particularly important investment over time;
- a high degree of familiarity with otherness, which implies an ability to make choices, to manage risk optionally and to employ diversified strategies within partly compatible social and cultural logics;
- a relationship with the educational establishment leading to autonomous conduct with respect to school orthodoxy.

In this view, plurilingualism and the PPC are phenomena that cannot be reduced to an individual dimension, but which assume full meaning along a “family path” (*ibidem*, p. 20), in which the experiences of previous generation(s) constitute a form of social, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). Working with teenagers makes the family dimension even more central to a theoretical and methodological discussion on the study of plurilingualism and multiple identities since, as is the case in our study, youth represent a “generation which inherits a bi-national linguistic and cultural capital has more chance of making this capital yield a profit, and of giving it a plurilingual and pluricultural form” (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009: 20). As Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) state, identities can be viewed as social, discursive, and narrative options in a specific time and place. In contexts of mobility and language and cultural contacts, they become particularly salient as “multiple interpretations or meanings collide, resulting in a power struggle as to whose interpretation prevails” (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004: 19; see also Block, 2008). Identity is therefore a negotiated and situated experience, in and across social communities where learning occurs (Kramsch, 2009; Norton & Toohey, 2011). As Wenger states (1998: 215): “Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information but a process of becoming.”

To sum up, plurilingualism and plurilingual competence, though single and unique, cannot be reduced to their individual dimensions; they assume full meaning in a social trajectory and path. While studies have clearly highlighted the impact of national policies and the demographic effects of economic decisions on language and cultural transmission, stress needs to also be placed on the family dimension. This methodological choice makes it necessary to also give special importance to generational and family factors in understanding experiences of transitioning and mobility in language usage and the development of plurilingual learners’ identities. As Kolb & Kolb (2009) state:

A learning identity develops over time from tentatively adopting a learning stance toward life experience, to a more confident learning orientation, to a learning self that is specific to certain contexts and ultimately to a learning self-identity that permeates deeply into all aspects of the way one lives their life. (p. 5)

Despite our emphasis on plurilingualism as a framework for understanding fluid and new configurations of language practices and language learning, in our interviews with participants, however, we used the term multilingual(ism) to refer to both social and individual aspects of language and cultural practices, because this reflects common usage in English, Korean and Mandarin by non-specialists in the field.

### Participants, Methodology and Data Collection

We present data from a four-year ethnographic study of a group of multilingual teenagers from a *ChaoXianZu* diaspora in Beijing, which was carried out by Meilan Piao Ehlert between 2007 and 2008, and follow-up interviews and emails in 2012 and 2013, as part of a master (Ehlert, 2008) and doctoral research. The focal participants for this study were selected from over 70 students through word-of-mouth referrals of Meilan's family and friends in China. Data collection methods included an initial survey, semi-structured individual and group interviews (conducted by Meilan Piao Ehlert in Chinese, Korean, English or Japanese, depending on participants' preferences), email follow-ups, participant observations, field-notes and photo-ethnography. The survey was based on participants' self-reports about their multilingual practices, social networks and representations of the value of multilingualism and bilingual education in a minority extraterritorial language in China.

Drawing from data collected during the larger study, this paper focuses on interviews with six focal teenagers (including the written artefacts they shared and commented), to gain in-depth insights, or thick descriptions (Cresswell, 2007; Geertz, 1973), into participants' experiences and stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) of their social, cultural and linguistic practices, their understandings of the value of plurilingualism and bilingual education in a world in mutation, and their self-perceptions of (learners') identity. We also present some data collected in 2013 to better understand the long-term trajectory of these teenagers. The six focal participants were selected on the basis of the following criteria: (a) they self-identified as *ChaoXianZu* [ethnic Korean Chinese], and all were high school students in Beijing at the time of the initial study; (b) they were speakers of two or more languages; (c) their parents also self-designated as *ChaoXianZu* [ethnic Korean Chinese], and one or both parents had received K-12 formal ethnic Korean education in China; (d) their family had been residing in Beijing for less than 12 years, and was holding a *Zan-zhu Ju-min* status (temporary resident) in Beijing. All six families were originally from the Mudanjiang region, where the second largest *ChaoXianZu* community is located in the Province of Heilongjiang, one of the three northeast provinces where Koreans have traditionally been residing in China.

Table 1. Profiles of the focal participants

Participants	Gender	Age	In Beijing (years)	Languages	Education
Lan	F	13	10	CEK	Primary ~ Jr. High: Han majority schools
Sang	M	13	11	CEK	Primary ~ Jr. High: Han majority schools
Ryoung	F	15	9	CEK	Primary ~ Sr. High: Han majority schools
Mina	F	14	7	CKE	Primary (K-G3): Korean school Jr. High (G4~) & Sr. High: Han majority schools
Ranhee	F	16	8	CKJE	Primary (K-G3): Korean school Jr. High (G4~) & Sr. High: Han majority schools



Chunhee	F	17	12	CKEJ	<i>Primary</i> (K-G6): Korean school; <i>Jr. High</i> : Han school; <i>Sr. High</i> : Int'l (English) school
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*Notes:* (1) 'C' – Chinese (Mandarin); 'E' - English; 'K' – Korean; 'J' – Japanese; (2) 'Primary' – primary school; 'Jr. High' – Junior high school; 'Sr. High' – Senior high school; (3) 'Languages': Listed in an order based on the proficiency level of each language, from the most to less familiar ones. (4) See Ehlert (2008) for more details. All names are pseudonyms.

People who auto-identify as *ChaoXianZu* in Beijing usually live in an area known as WangJing Korean Town, easily recognizable as the linguistic landscape reflects its Koreanness with bilingual signs everywhere. Contrary to other areas of high Korean population in China, there is no formal ethnic Korean education system, other than private Korean language schools and a privately funded *ChaoXianZu* dormitory-based primary school, which was established by a former teacher of an ethnic Korean high school in Heilongjiang (where one of the focal participant graduated from). This explains why all the focal participants were schooled in Han majority schools at the time of the study, while three had received formal education in Korean at the elementary level.

## Findings and Interpretations

In order to gain better insight into how participants understood their own plurilingual competence, we asked them to describe how they used and valued bilingual education, and their multiple resources in different languages in their daily lives. We also asked them to share and comment written artefacts that they thought illustrated their multilingual skills in various settings, at school, at home and with their peers. The languages in their repertoires included their family language (Korean), the national language, *Hanyu* or Mandarin Chinese, and a foreign language learnt at school, English and/or Japanese, often from an early age. Written artefacts they chose to share included examples of school-work, but also emails, facebook conversations and tweets.

### ***Participants' Experiences and Representations of Plurilingualism: From Feeling 'Helpless' and 'Obligated' to 'Special' and 'Empowered'***

The focal participants in the study all attached strong benefits to plurilingualism and their plurilingual competence, which they linked to bilingual education, and their diverse individual experiences within the complex social, historical, political and cultural time and spaces in which they located their language use. Two key themes emerged from the interviews with all six participants: *a strong acknowledgement of multilingual learning* as a key aspect for an increased level of self-confidence (or self-esteem), and *a tendency to prioritize other languages over their own family language (Korean)*. All six teenagers showed an acute awareness of, and strong attachment to, the importance of learning their family language, Korean, thus echoing their parents' preferences and priorities, which sometimes left them with a sense of helplessness and obligation, as they thought they could not respond adequately to their parents' high expectations. This is particularly noticeable in the interviews with the three youths who did not attend primary schooling in Korean. At the same time, however, all six youth revealed keen investment in *Hanyu* [Mandarin Chinese] and English as desirable languages to learn

and master, above the learning of their own language, and showed a subtle understanding of how languages play different roles and display shifting values on the linguistic global and local markets. All the focal teenagers had been studying English from an early age (generally from grade 3), and three had also attended a Korean school in Beijing. For all of them, English is an important language to learn considering its capital value. This tendency is revealed in a grade 7 participant's following comment:

Sang: in this globalized era, speaking English is a basic communication requirement, because it is an international common language.

失落感—“想学，但没法子” *Helplessness: “I want to [learn Korean], but cannot”*

### ***One Mother Tongue***

All six teenagers clearly pointed out they viewed Korean as an important in-group symbol. They claimed they felt privileged to learn it, including the three teenagers (Ryoung, Sang and Lan) who never received formal language education in Korean. They insisted on the need to learn Korean, because it is their own language. As such, they were bonded to learning Korean as a moral duty and obligation. This social and parental pressure left some of them feeling ‘helpless’ because of perceived conflicting loyalties, as is evidenced in the ways Ryoung and Sang envision Korean or Chinese as mutually exclusive choices as a mother tongue they need to adhere to and put first in a hierarchy of language choices:

#### *Interview excerpt 1*

Researcher (R): 作为朝鲜族，你觉得你应该学朝鲜语吗？[As an ethnic Korean living in China, do you think it is necessary to learn Korean? ]

Ryoung (Ry): 是。因为朝鲜语是我的母语。[Yes, because Korean is my mother tongue. ]

R: 实际上，你的汉语比朝语讲的更好，你不觉得汉语是你的母语吗？[In fact, you speak much better Chinese than you speak Korean. Don't you think Chinese is your mother tongue?]

Ry: 我不觉得。[No, I don't.]

R: 为什么朝语是你的母语呢？[Why do you say Korean is your mother tongue?]

Ry: 因为我是朝鲜族的。[Because, I am an ethnic Korean.]

R: 那汉语对你来说是什么语言呢？[So, what does the Chinese language mean to you? ]

Ry: 汉语应该是朝鲜语之后的吧。我觉得应该先学朝语，再学汉语。[I think Chinese may come after Korean. I feel that I should have learned Korean first, and then learn Chinese.]

R: 你觉得你学语言的顺序有些倒了个。[Humm ..., you mean that the order of your language learning is reversed?]

Ry: 嗯，因为是来北京上的学嘛。[Yeah. I think that's because I have been attending schools in Beijing. ]

We see in the *Interview excerpt 1* that Ryoung claims Korean as her mother tongue, even though she does not speak Korean as well as Chinese. She insists she never thought of Mandarin Chinese as her mother tongue while she acknowledges that Mandarin Chinese is the most fluent language for her (the language she has been learning and using as her primary language at school and at home) and despite the fact she also says later in her interview she never felt that there was any difference between her and her Han Chinese classmates.

**特殊感 – “双母语” *Feeling “Special”*: “I have two mother tongues”**

Both Ryoung and Sang considered Korean as their mother tongue. However, compared to Ryoung's perception that she needs to be loyal to *one mother tongue* only, Sang, as shown in the *Interview excerpt 2*, displays a more flexible view of his plurilingual competence, and confirmed that he considers to have two mother tongues, Korean and Mandarin Chinese. He declares that ethnic Korean is his mother tongue, because it is the language of his ethnic group, even when challenged by the interviewer that he does not speak it well, and he sees Mandarin Chinese as also his mother tongue, as it is the national language of the country where he has been living since his birth.

*Interview Excerpt 2*

Sang (S): 是的。因为它是民族语言吗。[Yes, it is [necessary to learn Korean], because it's my heritage language. ]

R: 你觉得朝语是母语吗? [Do you think Korean is your mother tongue?]

S: 是。[Yep.]

R: 为什么是母语呢? 但你讲的最差的就是朝语。那, 你还是觉得是自己的母语吗? [Why do you say so? It seems to me that Korean is your weakest language. Do you really think Korean is your mother tongue?]

S: 是呵。[Yeah, definitely.]

R: 那, 这, 汉语, 怎么解释呢? 也是你的母语吗? [Then, how about *Han Yu* (Mandarin)? Is it your mother tongue?]

S: 它当然也是了。因为我是中国人吗。[Of course, it also is. I'm a Chinese after all.]

R: 你是说, 你有两种母语? [Do you mean that you have two mother tongues?]

S: 是。一个是朝鲜语, 一个是汉语。[Yes, one is Korean and the other is *Han Yu*.]

R: 那, 这两种语言有什么区别呢? [What are the differences between the two?]

S: 朝鲜语是民族语言。那, 汉语是肯定要会的, 因为中国人吗。[Korean is my heritage language. *Han Yu*, I must learn, considering I'm a Chinese.]

R: 是国家语言? [Do you mean because it is the national language?]

S: 是的。[Yep.]

The *interview excerpt 1* and *interview excerpt 2* show how two teenagers, Ryoung and Sang, who never received any formal ethnic language education, presented two distinctive yet related views regarding the legitimacy of their mother tongue. Although they both acknowledge Mandarin Chinese as an important language in their lives, these two teenagers position the language differently in relation to their identities. However, for Sang, both Korean and Chinese languages are mandatory communication tools; therefore, he positions them equally as primary languages, both as mother tongues. Sang considers the former as the symbol of who he is “ethnically”, that is for him, born into an ethnic Korean family, and the latter as the national language where he is living now, China. Ryoung considers Korean as her sole mother tongue, and considers her languages in a hierarchy of loyalties, with Korean first and then Chinese. Because of the high expectations she puts on herself and her idealized and normative approach to language and group loyalty, she expressed her helplessness and regrets in terms of learning her heritage and family language, due to her inability to access proper resources (which she describes later in her interview as her lack of receiving formal language training at an ethnic Korean school) because she had to ‘moved to Beijing’.

**义务感 *Feeling “Obligated”***: “to learn my own ethnic language, .. makes me feel special too”

The three teenage girls (Ranhee, Mina and Chunhee) who received formal ethnic language education also showed strong ethnic awareness in terms of connecting Korean symbolically and affectively with their families and a Korean group affiliation. For Ranhee, knowing and learning Korean at school is important because “it is my own ethnic language. If I do not speak Korean, I would feel lonely at home when I am with all other family members and relatives who are mainly communicating in Korean.” As shown in her statement, Ranhee discloses strong attachment to Korean within the sphere of her private life, which is undoubtedly motivated by her personal experience and her family environment.

*Interview excerpt 3*

Mina (M): 是，我觉得学习朝鲜语很重要。因为多讲一种语言，别人崇拜我。如在学校，我的同学和朋友都觉得我特殊。[Yes, I do [think it is necessary to learn Korean]. Speaking an additional language makes others admire me. At school, for example, my classmates and friends all think I’m very special.]

R: 是吗？为什么特殊？[Really? Why “special”?]

M: 本民族的语言应该掌握。应尽量保持，发展民族的文化，需要语言作为基础。会朝鲜语是说明自己是朝鲜族的一个方面。就是说，因为是朝鲜族吗，既然是这个民族，应该学会这个民族的东西。关于这个，我不知道其中深包含的含义我不明白，但是我觉得语言是很重要的东西。[Yes, because it is my heritage language, I have the obligation to learn and maintain my own ethnic language and culture. Language is the foundation of developing ethnic culture. Speaking with a good command of my own ethnic language is a

proof of my ethnicity as a Korean. In other words, because I am a Korean, I must learn something special about my ethnic group. About this, I am not quite sure about the deep meaning behind it, but I feel language is an important thing. ]

As with Ranhee, as shown in her statements in *interview excerpt 3* above, Mina acknowledges her ethnic language as an important marker of her membership in the *ChaoXianZu* community. That is, if a person does not know their ethnic language, then that person “should not be able to claim that he or she belongs to that ethnic group.” She also shows a distinctive view of the value of her languages, and of bilingual education as a means to retain and develop her skills in her family’s language and culture. She sees her language skills as an asset for which she can receive respect from her peers, and it makes her unique and “special” because she possesses something that makes her classmates “admire” her.

Chunhee, a grade 12 student who received the highest level of ethnic language education, also agrees with Mina and Ranhee, in terms of the significance of preserving her heritage language and cultures. For her, knowing ‘the root’ of one’s ethnic origin is important, but she regrets that “unfortunately, quite a lot of people are still not clear about these kinds of stuff.” She considers that knowing one’s origin is an essential step to knowing about herself, as she believes that this will “help a person to know more about the self”, which she strongly connects to self-confidence.

超能 **‘Super Empowerment’**: *Feeling “very privileged, .. because I speak more languages”*

As discussed above, the teenagers highlighted that knowing several languages is important, as they consider this empowers them and increases their self-confidence. For Ranhee, it is because “learning a new language and learning it well is a very difficult task.” Mina considers that speaking multiple languages is “a reflection of one’s talent”, as she considered that “not everyone can speak multiple languages. To pursue one’s effort to learn the languages and master them well proves my skills (and commitment), and this is something that one should be proud of.”

Both Ryoung and Lan expressed the view that being multilingual can make them feel proud of themselves. For Ryoung, to hear “someone speak fluent Korean among other Chinese speakers, that person looks very special.” Similarly, Lan felt “very privileged,... because I speak more languages than my friends who are often hanging out with me. When I talk to people in the languages that my friends do not speak, I think my friends are envious of my special talent in multiple languages.”

Besides the benefits of learning English and learning Korean, these teenagers also highlighted the importance of learning *Hanyu* [Mandarin Chinese], their national language. For instance, Ranhee considered learning *Hanyu* [Mandarin Chinese] is empowering her in many ways. She emphasized the importance of attending a Chinese school as a *ChaoXianZu*, because “China’s national power is getting stronger and stronger recently. Because I am living in China, I feel very privileged with the opportunities of studying Mandarin Chinese, and utilizing this skill in the future”.

## ***Increased Mobility and the Reconfiguration of Plurilingual Repertoires as Assets and Capital***

*Transition from local to central spaces: Increased flexibility in mobility, but with constraints*

Talking about transitions between different spaces, some participants insisted on differences in educational resources. Mina, for example, talked about the “*limited conditions*”(in teaching facilities and staff in the ethnic Korean public school [in Heilongjiang]) whereas moving to Beijing opened up opportunities because of the “*rich resources* (in the Han public school in Beijing)”. But moving to Beijing is not always equivalent to open access to education and opportunities. While moving to Beijing can be a magnet for parents in terms of business and work opportunities, it can induce limitations in the choices of schooling when families have a *ZanZhu JuMin* [temporary resident] status in Beijing, for reasons that will be illustrated in the data excerpt below.

As a part of the follow-up process, after the in-person individual interviews, one of the researchers contacted the teenagers and their parents who had participated in individual interviews during the fieldwork in Beijing, but had not shared insight about their migratory experience from a local town to the city of Beijing, notably in relation to school integration. In order to know more about their school transfer experiences, questions were emailed to all participants. Only Ranhee responded about her experience. While her testimony does not reflect the situations of all the teenagers, it unfolds some acute challenges participants with a temporary residency status in Beijing encounter. This was confirmed later through phone conversations with other teenagers and adult participants. With the omission of some private information, the original e-mail response in Chinese is as follows:

### *E-mail correspondence excerpt 1.1*

Researcher (R). Question (Q) 1: 您父母给您办转学时（从地方城市转到北京市），手续办得顺利吗？ [Was the school transfer process smooth when your parents transferred you from the school in the local city (town) to the one in Beijing?]

Ranhee (Rh). Answer[A] 1: 转学手续办得比较顺利。 [Yes, it was quite smooth.]

R.Q1-1 您在北京的临时居民身份没有阻碍您进入第一志愿的学校及班级吗？如是，具体是什么样的障碍？ [Due to your temporary resident status in Beijing, were there any obstacles for you to transfer to the school and grade of your first choice?]

Rh. A 1-1: 有阻碍进入第一志愿的学校。很多北京市的重点中学,如果没有北京户口的话,学习成绩非常好,也是无用的。你只能在拥有北京户口时才有资格进入那个学校。 [Yes, there were some limitations in attending my first choice schools. Most of the key (*Zhong-dian*) secondary schools in Beijing only take students who have official resident status in Beijing. For students without such status, it is impossible to get admitted into those schools, even the ones with superior academic records.]

R. Q1-2 您参加转校 / 进校考试了吗? 考试含不含语言能力测试?  
[Before transferring a school here, were you required to take an admissions exam? Did you have to take a language proficiency test?]

Rh. A 1-2: 进校考试参加了, 一般只考语文, 数学, 英语3科。没有特别的语言能力测试。 [Yes, I did join an admissions exam, which generally only tests three main subjects - language arts, math, and English. I did not take any language proficiency test.]

R. Q1-3: 如您原来在地方上的是朝鲜族学校的话, 您转校时需要考汉语水平测试吗? [If you attended an ethnic Korean school in your hometown, were you required to take a Chinese proficiency test before transferring to a school in Beijing?]

Rh. A1-3: 不需要考汉语水平测试 [No, it was not a requirement.]

### *E-Mail correspondance excerpt 1.2*

Researcher (R). Q2: 您父母在北京给您办理考中学或高中的手续时, 有没有因为您在北京的暂住居民的身份, 您能进入的学校受过限制? [When you applied for junior high school or senior high school entrance exams, did you ever encounter any obstacles that prevented you from applying for the schools of your first choice because of your temporary residency status in Beijing?]

Ranhee (Rh). A2: 受限制, 有些重点高中, 必须要有北京市户口, 但一些不是非常重点的学校就没有限制, 但可能学费比北京市户口的同学贵一点, 而我到北京来上的小学, 初中都是私立学校, 所以就没有受限制, 而且, 基本上, 只要不是选择非常重点的学校的话, 不大会受限制. 中考时, 不是北京市户口的学生也可以考, 而且高中就只能自己选择学校去上, 但高考, 必须要有北京市户口... [Yes, there were some limitations. Entering into some major high schools required *Beijing Hukou* [official residency status in Beijing]. Some semi-major high schools allow non-resident student admissions, with much higher tuition fees compared to the locals. In my case, because I had attended private elementary and junior schools in Beijing, it did not impact me at all. Generally speaking, there are no big limitations in entering high schools in Beijing, as long as you do not choose the major schools. To take '*Zhong-kao*' (admissions exam to senior high schools), non-resident students can apply to many schools. However, in order to take '*Gao-kao*' (university entrance exam), all applicants are required to have official residency status in Beijing.]

In spite of the easing of China's *Hukou* (residential control) system, the movement from a local region to a major city remains particularly challenging for families who have school aged children. The *e-mail correspondance excerpt 1.1* and *1.2* illuminate this situation better. The excerpts exemplify some disadvantages that these teenagers encounter: (i) limitation in the choices of school; (ii) high tuition (compared to what local residents in Beijing pay); (iii) various constraints in terms of taking *Gaokao* [the national university entrance examination] in Beijing, which forced them to either attend an international high school (like Chunhee) or return to their hometown to take the exam. All the teenagers and parents in this study confirmed this reality. They confided that to

solve the thorny problem of taking the *Gaokao* examination, many migrant students had to transfer back to the schools in their home town where they still had an official residency status, or they had to transfer their “*hukou*” [residency status certificate] to a city or province nearby Beijing, and attend high school in that city or province away from their family, so that they could take the university entrance exam.

*Transition between multiple spaces: Increased mobility with constraints, utilizing plurilingual repertoires and assets in new social networks*

Even within the same city, however, school transfer between different spaces is not an easy task. In the following *interview excerpt 5*, Chunhee, a grade 12 student, shares her experience of transitioning between different schools. Because of her family choices, she had to undertake two main transitions between three different types of schools in Beijing: from a private ethnic Korean primary school to a public Han Chinese junior high, and from the Han Chinese school to an international (English) senior high school. Chunhee’s case is particularly interesting, as she was born and raised in a Korean-speaking family and attended ethnic Korean boarding school for seven years, in an environment where most students and teachers were Korean. Chunhee then spent three years in a Chinese public junior high school, before attending the international senior high school for two and a half years. Proportionally, the total number of years that she had actually been surrounded by Han classmates was only five and a half years. Nonetheless, Chunhee felt that the Han Chinese people have had a greater impact on her identity, thus making her feel “Chinese”. Her networking strategies nonetheless do not always support her claim that she feels more at ease with Han people than with Koreans.

*Interview excerpt 4*

Researcher (R): 你从朝语学校转到中文学校的时候，有没有感觉一些变化？

[Were you aware of any changes during your school transition period from an ethnic Korean elementary school to a Chinese Junior High school?]

Chunhee (C): 刚转到汉族学校，就头两个月，我感觉很难于融入汉族同学的团体。因为我不怎么了解他们的原因吧。[Yes, mostly during the initial two months, as I felt hardship in fitting into the Han Chinese community. Maybe that was because I did not know them very well.]

R: 当时跟你关系最好的朋友是汉族吗？[In that Junior High, did you make some good friends who have a Han Chinese background?]

C: 不，当时在初中的时候都是朝鲜族。呃，有一个，但这个汉族同学原来也上过朝语学校。[No, all my good friends in the Junior High were ChaoXianZu. Oh, right, there was one Han Chinese friend, who also attended the ethnic Korean school before.]

R: 那现在的高中呢？[How about now in the Senior High school?]

C: 在现在的（国际学校），我最好的朋友都是汉族，因为没有朝鲜族的人了。噢，还包括一个韩国人。[All my good friends here (an International High) are the Han Chinese, as there are no ethnic Korean classmates. Oh, I also



have a good friend, a girl from *HanGuo* (the Republic of Korea or South Korea).]

In her interview above, Chunhee shares the challenges that she went through when she was interacting with her new peer groups during each of her school transfers. Interview excerpt 4 presents two key aspects regarding the teenager's bridging strategies to cope with the challenges attached to having to integrate new network spaces. On the one hand, Chunhee shows a tendency to hang out with classmates who she previously had connections with, for instance, the ones from the same ethnic Korean primary school she attended. Her strategy to maintain her social network with her friends at school is essentially based on a shared experience of Korean language and culture with her former classmates and one Han Chinese friend who had attended the same primary Korean school. On the other hand, however, when the old connections are not available and social networks do not overlap (i.e., when Chunhee has to transfer to Beijing international school), she integrates alternative social networks, by maximizing her other linguistic and cultural repertoires (i.e., *Hanyu*). Chunhee's strategy to bank on her plurilingualism as an asset towards social integration and acceptance is also visible in the *interview excerpt 8.1* and the *interview excerpt 8.3*, below, where Chunhee shares how she perceives her identities to be shifting in differently situated times and places.

### ***Engaging In Multiple (Learners') Identities***

*"I am a ChaoXianZu, but also a ZhongGuoRen [Chinese]"*

Whether they had an experience of attending a formal ethnic language training program or not, all teenage participants in the study acknowledged a strong awareness of their unique position as a *ChaoXianZu*, an ethnic Korean living in China, a unique identity, different from being a Korean living in Korea or in another part of the world, and not necessarily attached to high levels of competence in the Korean language. At the same time, they also highlighted their identity as a *ZhongGuoRen* (Chinese), as illustrated below with Lan's statement:

Lan: I am an ethnic Korean born and living in China, but does not speak Korean a lot. I am also a Chinese, because I have Chinese citizenship, but belong to an ethnic Korean group. However, I am not the same as the Koreans born and raised in North or South Korea, because we are living in different countries [translated from Chinese].

For Lan, the affirmation of her dual identity is important, while she clearly differentiates her *ChaoXianZu* identity (as an 'ethnic Korean' living in China) with the 'legitimate' Koreans from the northern or southern part of the Korean peninsular, the land of her ancestors. This tendency is also revealed from the statements of other teenage informants, for instance, the views of single or dual mother tongue by the two teenagers (Ryoung and Sang), as discussed in the earlier sections. Another example is their understanding on the concept of *Zu Guo* [homeland or home-country]. In our interviews, all six teenagers claimed that their *Zu Guo* is China, while acknowledging their unique

position in China as members of the ethnic Korean group, as Sang expresses in the following example presented as excerpt 5:

*Interview excerpt 5*

Researcher (R): 你觉得你与汉族比不一样吗? [Do you think you are different from the Han Chinese people?]

Sang (S): 是的。肯定是的。[Yes, of course.]

R: 那, 怎么个不同? [How different?]

S: 汉族, 它只是最普通的民族。[The Han Chinese, that's the most ordinary ethnic group.]

R: 呃, 最普通吗? [Humm...“the most ordinary” one?!]

S: 它, 不属于少数民族。是个多数的。[It is not an ethnic minority group, but the ethnic majority.]

R: 你就觉得你自己很特殊? [So, you feel you are the special one?]

S: 是, 因为自己是少数民族。[Yep, as I am an ethnic minority.]

R: 你觉得因为你是少数民族, 很自豪吗? [Do you mean that you are proud of yourself because of your ethnic minority status?]

S: 自豪啊。[Yes, I am very proud.]

R: 为什么? [Why?]

S: 不是汉族啊。[Because I am not a Han Chinese.]

R: 哦, 是吗? [Oh, really?]

S: 啊, 特殊, 少... [Yep! (my ethnic group is) small, but special ...]

Sang indicates his appreciation of living in China as a ChaoXianZu, as he considers China as his *Zu Guo*. At the same time, he notes that he is different from his classmates from the Han Chinese community, while he points out that he is also different from the *HanGuoRen* [the Koreans living/from the Republic of Korea (or South Korea)], because his home is in China, not in Korea. Sang clearly presents his ethnic membership as a positive, valuable asset that makes him feel unique and privileged compared to the Han Chinese majority group. Sang feels fortunate, because he is not a Han Chinese (a member of the “ordinary” majority), but a ChaoXianZu.

*Interview excerpt 6*

Researcher (R): 你在上学的时候, 就是你会自豪的跟同学们讲你是朝鲜族吗? [At school, do you proudly tell your classmates that you are a ChaoXianZu?]

Sang (S): 没有啊。[No, I do not.]

R: 你故意不跟他们说? [Do you intentionally not talk about this with them?]

S: 不会。他们已经知道了呀。[No, I do not have to, as they already know.]

R: 他们怎么知道的呢? [How did they know?]

S: 那个, 我的姓 X 不是普遍用在朝鲜人或韩国人的吗。[Well, you see I have a typical Korean last name, which is often used only by people with a Korean background.]

R: 他们已经知道这个吗? [Do they already know about this fact?]

S: 嗯，同学嘛。 [Right, because we are classmates.]

R: 他们一听你的名字，就知道你是朝鲜族？ [You mean, they know your ethnicity from your family name?]

S: 嗯，或者是韩国人。他们这么说。然后（我再）解释一下，不是韩国人，是中国人。 [Yes, or *HanGuoRen*. That's what they said. Then, I explain again that I am not a *Hanguoren*, but a Chinese. ]

Sang's statement in *interview excerpt 6* unravels the current status of ethnic Korean groups in China. Middle-aged ChaoXianZu people in China, like the parents of these teenagers, experienced both periods: when the ethnic Korean language was highly stigmatized during the Cultural Revolution, and when the status of Korean and Chinese Koreans was rising after the 1990s. However, these teenagers were born and raised during China's innovative reform era, spending their school years during and after the establishment of renewed diplomatic relationships between China and South Korea in 1993. In other words, the economic and political power of South Korea in China, and the increased transnational flows of South Koreans to Chinese large cities such as Beijing for business and education, have contributed to raise the status of the local Chinese Koreans in China, despite the fact that the two communities (the newly arrived South Koreans and the Chinese Koreans) do not necessarily mingle easily or share a common identity (Kim, 2010).

### ***Navigating Dual Identities***

Among the six multilingual ethnic Korean migrant teenagers interviewed during the initial fieldwork in Beijing in December 2007, Chunhee, Ranhee and Mina were the only ones to have received some ethnic language education through a formal private or public ethnic Korean school system in Beijing or their hometowns. At the time, they were all currently attending high school in Beijing. Chunhee, then a grade 12 student, received the highest level of formal ethnic language education, while both Ranhee and Mina attended an ethnic Korean school until grade 3. Among these three, Ranhee had the highest level of Korean language fluency, both in speaking and writing. With an emphasis on the examination of Chunhee's case, this section will also briefly look at Ranhee's situation, as a compared to Chunhee's case.

Ranhee, a then grade 10 student, moved to Beijing with her family when she was in grade 4. Since then, she had been attending Chinese public schools in Beijing. Initially, Ranhee attended a private school, as she did not have to take an entrance exam. In junior high, she was the class president as well as a member of the school choir. She visited her grandparents very often during the summer and winter breaks until her grandparents also moved to Beijing. The main language that her family members speak at home is Korean and she often speaks to them in Korean, too. At the time of the interview, she was attending senior high school in a far suburb in Beijing.

In Ranhee's opinion, an ethnic language can be mastered at home; thus, it is not necessary to go to a Korean school. She emphasized the importance of attending a Chinese school as a *ChaoXianZu*, because "China's national power is getting stronger and stronger recently. Because I am living in China, I feel very privileged with the opportunities of studying Mandarin Chinese, and utilizing this skill in the future."

*Interview excerpt 7*

Researcher (R): 你怎么定义你自己的属性 (identity)? [How would you define your identity?]

Ranhee (Rh): 我知道我是朝鲜人...朝鲜...嗯.....然后, 有时候, 就是..., 以前在学校, 升国旗式的时候...因为我当时是身为主持人吗, 然后,要升国旗, 有宣誓。誓言是, 说的是“我是中国人。我爱我的祖国。我要使它更加繁荣昌盛”。 [I know I am a Korean. ...Korea....ummm...and, sometimes, I mean, when I was in (Junior High) school, during the national flag raising ceremony...I hosted the ceremony (as the class president), I had to lead the oath, which was “I am a Chinese, I love my homeland. I will make it more prosperous”.]

Rh: 但是每次说这句话的时候, 感觉有点...就是...不知道, 不知道, 感觉...因为我是朝鲜族人, 我觉得我是朝鲜人。但是, 还要宣誓, 宣誓的时候说, 是中国人。中国人。 [But, each time I repeatedly swore the oath, I felt like, ...I mean, ...ummm, it's so hard to express that kind of feeling....Because I am of an ethnic Korean nationality, I feel that I am a Korean, but I had to swear the oath, and to take a vow, and say ‘I am a Chinese’. ‘A Chinese’. ]

Rh: 所以..., 反正自己是认为自己是朝鲜人, 但是...但是宣誓的时候, 要说, 面对着国旗去宣誓说, 我是中国人。然后, 我...感觉, 这种...觉得, 挺难受。 [So, ... I think that I am a Korean, but, but I had to swear the oath in front of the national flag and say ‘I am a Chinese’. Then, ...I felt...like, you know like, ...I had very hard feelings.]

Ranhee’s statement in *interview excerpt 7* above is another good reflection of how participants play out their multiple identities. Born and brought up as a Korean by her parents and elders, Ranhee strongly believed in her ethnicity as a Korean. At school, however, when she had to fulfil her obligations as the class president of a Chinese public school system, she felt that the legitimacy of her identity as a Korean was being challenged. Ranhee felt confused and started to question her ethnic Korean identity when she had to lead her class to swear the oath in front of China’s national flag. On the one hand, she had been brought up believing in the Chinese ideology she had learned from school, that she was supposed to feel comfortable with her identity as a *ZhongGuoRen*. However, on the other hand, she felt her ethnic identity threatened, which she resented, as she had been brought up as an ethnic Korean, even if she was living in China. As a result, she had to navigate new tensions, as she could not reconcile the ideological discourses of diversity in unity that encouraged the pluralisation of Chinese identity, and local practices that demanded homogeneity and her adhesion and identification to one identity only.

Other teenagers also expressed such feelings of tension between their multiple identities. This includes Chunhee, a then grade 12 student, who described her repertoire as including four languages: Chinese, English, Korean and Japanese. She also thought herself as a competent multilingual language learner, insisting she was more fluent in Chinese and English, although with seven years of Kindergarten to grade 6 (K-G6) formal schooling at a privately funded ethnic Korean elementary school (the only primary school that delivered a full time ethnic language training program in Beijing

since the early 1990s), Chunhee received the highest ethnic Korean education among the six teenage participants interviewed. Out of the three girls who received formal ethnic Korean language training, however, she reported and exhibited the lowest language competency in Korean, especially in spoken language. Interestingly, her speaking skills in Japanese seemed comparable to her Korean, a surprising fact considering Chunhee had only learned Japanese for one year through private lessons and online courses. Looking into the history of Chunhee's schooling explains how she developed various forms of language investments, which resulted in such unbalanced multilingual skills. Chunhee's family migrated to Beijing when she was five. Chunhee attended an ethnic Korean elementary boarding school (with one year in Kindergarten) for seven years, and attended a Chinese public boarding school for three years during her junior high school years. Both schools were located in the *ChaoYang* district, which is located northeast side of the capital city, nearby the Beijing international airport. After graduating from the junior high, she attended an international high school in the heart of downtown Beijing located in the WangFu Business street to where she travelled to from home daily, using public transportation.

Chunhee is unique, as shown in *interview excerpts 8* and *9* below. Her interview is particularly significant as she displays her own agency in assuming various identities in context. Chunhee asserts and reveals her identities through her complex use of her different linguistic resources in her repertoire, at various stages of her life. Given her language preferences, the interview with Chunhee was conducted in English and Chinese.

*Interview excerpt 8*

Researcher (R): How would you define your identity? [你怎么定义你自己的属性? ]

Chunhee (C): 住在中国的朝鲜族，但是一个中国人。 [An ethnic Korean nationality living in China, but I am a “Chinese”.]

R: Would you please explain more? [请你再具体说明一下好吗? ]

C: 因为我从小到大基本上都在讲中文。然后，到小学为止我上的是朝鲜族学校吗，所以说朝文的机会比较多。 [Maybe it is because I have been speaking Chinese for the majority of the time since my childhood. And then, because I attended an ethnic Korean primary school, I had more opportunity to speak in Korean (at that time).]

C: 但是，从初中开始到高中现在就是身边都是中国人—就是汉族朋友，都是说中文的人，所以就是基本上不怎么说朝文啦，反正一直在说中文。...

[However, since Junior High to Senior High until now, the people surrounding me are mostly Chinese, the Han Chinese friends who are speaking Chinese. So I barely have the chance to speak in Korean. Anyways, I have always been speaking in Chinese...]

C: 所以就觉得自己还是个中国人吧。 [Maybe this is why I feel that I am a “Chinese”?!]

In the initial stage of her interview, Chunhee seems to be focusing more on relating her identity with the practical usage of her linguistic repertoires in different time and spaces.

As shown in the *interview excerpt 8*, for instance, she strongly relates her identities in relation to her more or less intense usage of Korean or Chinese with her peer groups at school during each stage of her school life. Interestingly, while she presents herself with the common label endorsed by her community of being a Korean in China, she immediately refutes this identity to ratify another one, claiming she is Chinese, an identity that she presents as being a better reflection of her engagement and participation with the Han community (her “friends”) in her school. This intensity in her engagement is also visible in the way she considered she was speaking Chinese during “the majority of time”, whereas she has, in fact, been schooled in Korean for more years than she has in Chinese.

*Interview excerpt 9*

Chunhee: But, sometimes, I also feel that I am NOT a “Chinese”. [但是，有的时候也不觉得自己是个中国人。]

R: When do you feel that way? [什么时候?]

C: 跟韩国人在一起的时候。但是呢，也不觉得自己是个韩国人，跟他们在一起的时候。 [When I am with *Hanguo-ren*. But, I also feel that I am not a *Hanguo-ren*.]

In excerpt 9, Chunhee reveals her resistance to dominant discourses in her display of her multiple and shifting identities. After her first confirmation of being a Chinese Korean, she quickly re-evaluates her sense of belonging, claiming her difference in her feeling of being neither Chinese nor Korean when interacting with people with a ‘legitimate’ (i.e. unique) Korean or Chinese culture. Based on the close ties she establishes between her identities and multiple languages, Chunhee recognizes herself as having both an ‘ethnic Korean nationality’ in China, while still seeing herself as ‘Chinese’. Chunhee also feels that she is not a ‘Chinese’ when she is with *Hanguo-ren* (people from the Republic of Korea), and *not* being a ‘legitimate Korean’ when she is with those *Hanguo-ren* – ‘legitimate Koreans’. It is clear that Chunhee’s multilingual skills gave her the privilege to maintain good in-group communications with both the Han Chinese people and the Korean people. Nevertheless, it seems that the question of ‘legitimate’ identity played out loudly in her mind in different ways. For instance, she reports questioning her identity as a ‘legitimate Chinese’ when she was with the Han majority group in China, while she did not feel like a ‘legitimate Korean’ when she was with the people from the Korean peninsular.

Overall, as most other teenage participants, Chunhee emphasizes first the duality of her identities as a *ChaoXianZu* who is living in China, who also has a strong identity as a Chinese. Then she more specifically highlights the uniqueness of her (multiple) identity as a *ChaoXianZu*, by addressing the “differences” (i.e., linguistically and culturally) compared to members from the Han Chinese majority group, or compared to Koreans from the north (the *ChaoXianRen*) or from the south (the *HanGuoRen*). A careful analysis of her interview reveals that in fact, Chunhee finds more freedom and emancipation in the liquescence of identities that are “not entirely”, “neither nor” or “both”. Her own multiple identity can be found in the differences she can pinpoint and in her ease to surf various ascribed identities, claiming later in her interview that this does not make her “confused” (probably anticipating here adults’ responses to her resistance to comply and adhere to a fixed monocultural or even dual identity).

Despite these struggles to self-identify within the limited frames offered by their parents, their schools and the larger society, these teenagers, when given the opportunity, open up new possibilities and new forms of identification for themselves, creating unique and different spaces where they feel more comfortable and do not need to conform anymore to expectations and external pressure.

### ***Engaging as a Multilingual Learner and ‘Citizen of the World’***

#### *Learning through Active Engagement in New and Current Social Network Spaces*

##### *Interview excerpt 10*

Chunhee: 但是我不会自己特别*confuse* 这个东西...还是觉得挺好的。[But I do not get *confused* by this sort of thing... I still feel very good.]

R: 你觉得自己很特别吗? [Do you think that you are special?]

C: 我觉得我自己不属于任何一个国家, 还是觉得那种自己是站在世界中心的这种人。[Well, I feel that I do not belong to any specific nation, and rather feel that I am the kind of person who is standing right in the centre of this world.]

R: 呃, 是吗? [Oh, really?]

C: 不会特别评论那个国家或这个国家... [I mean that I do not specifically judge about this country or that country.]

R: I see. 那你不觉得特别*complicated* 吗? [Do you feel (your situation is) too complicated?]

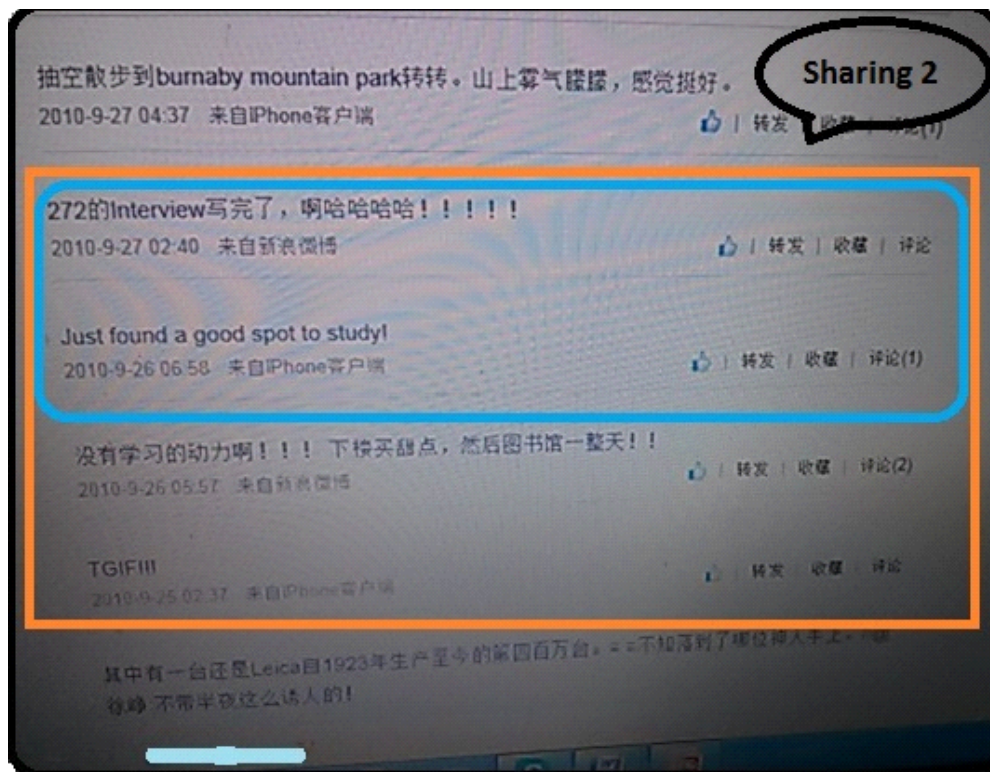
C: 嗯...没那么特别深入地想过。反正就觉得挺好的吗。因为可以学到更多的文化什么的。[Humm, I never thought about this really seriously... Anyhow, I feel very good, because I can learn more about other cultures, something like that.]

In the last part of her interview (excerpt 10), Chunhee assumes a more flexible and fluid identity that transcends communal allegiances and inherited territorializations of identities. Being exposed to different belief systems, and having forged strong ties with various communities, she seems to have developed a more adaptable view of what is acceptable in certain situations, and she has managed to engage in more complex forms of identification and new possibilities. She considers her multiple languages and identities as special tools for learning and for connecting herself with various and diverse cultures. Equipped with these new fluid transcommunal and transnational identities, she sees herself as a learning ‘citizen of the world’, who does ‘not belong to any specific nation’, and sees herself as ‘the kind of person who is standing right in the centre of this globe’.

While this initial interview was recorded in 2008 when Chunhee was still a high school student in Beijing, her life path and current language practices continue to illustrate her high cosmopolitanism and her love for creating new fun and interactive spaces for her and her friends. Chunhee is currently studying in Western Canada (so is now Lan, the youngest participant in the study; Mina is in Eastern Australia; two other participants are currently studying in Chinese universities: Ryueng in Shanghai, and Ranhee in Beijing). As many of her “90 *hou*” [九〇后□the Generation 1990s] peers including the other focal participants, Chunhee often shares interesting information in

truly unique and creative ways using virtual tools such Facebook, Twitter, WeChat and the Xinlang Weibo [Sina Twitter] to practice her languages and learn, as exemplified below.

When sharing these resources and commenting on them, Chunhee demonstrates her ability to present her ideas, utilizing her multiple language resources while maximizing the functions of modern high tech social network Apps in fun, practical and informative ways. The pictures below show pages of what could be constructed as a *virtual diary of learning*, that Chunhee shares with her “followers”, her virtual friends on Sina Twitter. Pictures 1 and 2 are examples of virtual iphone conversations, illustrating her uses of Chinese script and English to share information, feelings and emotions about her academic activities and university life (Picture 1) or using pictures and other semiotic devices, such as emoticons, and alternating Chinese and Korean to discuss her relationships (Picture 2).



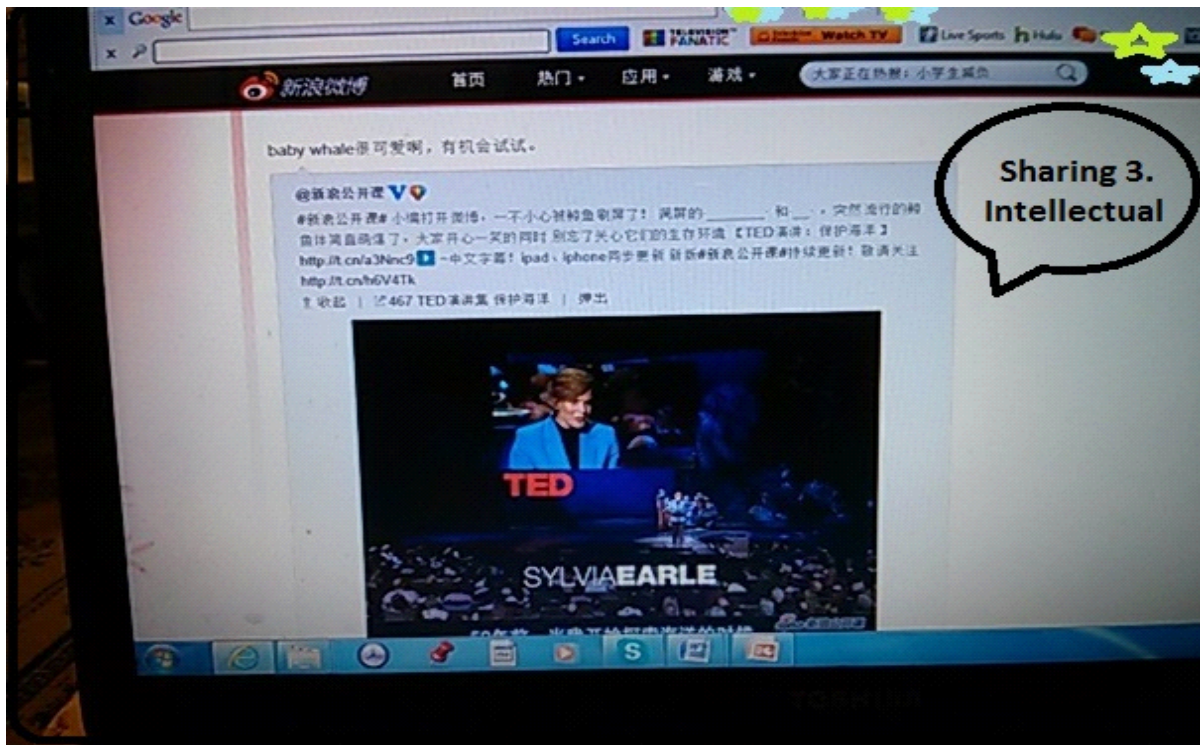
Picture 1. Sharing her Academic/University life



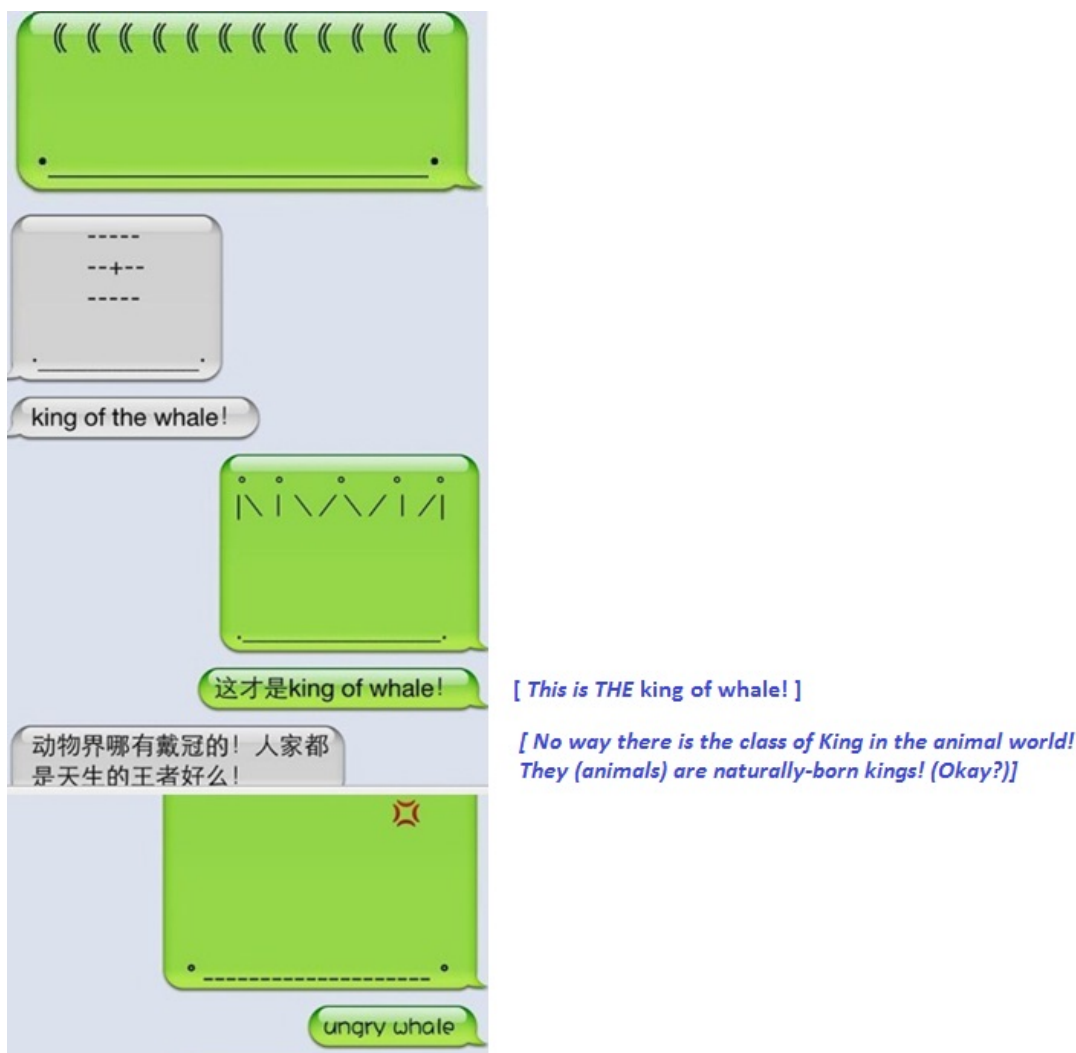


**Picture 2. Chatting about self-cooked dinners and relationships**

Pictures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate how Chunhee relays scientific information from a program on oceanography she has enjoyed. When commenting on her postings, she explains that she intended to share an interesting program on 'Baby Whales', and explore Sylvia Earle's lecture video released in a TED conference by the *XinLang GongKaiKe* [Sina Opencourse](Picture 3.1). She writes in her post, alternating between English and Chinese scripts: "*Baby whale* 很可爱啊, 有机会试试" [The baby whale is so cute, gotta check it out soon], an eye-catching and emotional advertisement to an attached original posting by the Sina Opencourse, with an 18-minute lecture video, on the topic of Protecting the Ocean. Besides the video, she also attached a copy of related comments on iMessage by the Sina Twitter followers (Picture 3.2). By forwarding the original message and sources of the Sina Opencourse, Chunhee provided extra information to her followers and peers, encouraging them to explore the TED lecture and other related information. Her use of several languages adds incentive and visual aesthetics, but also indicates complicity and a shared (multiple) learner's identity.



Picture 3.1. Sharing fun and intellectual info  
(Posted on November 10, 2011)



**Picture 3.2 A partial *iMessage* excerpt attached to a twitter posting along with the TED video (see *Excerpt 3*)**

Chunhee’s complex merging of languages and other semiotic resources to create meaning and learn are typical of how multilingual teenagers and youth appropriate languages to interact, relying on translingual and multimodal practices to enhance communication (for illustrative examples, see XX & Author2, 2013). Canagarajah (2013a) describes these new norms of entextualization and envoicing as “codemeshing”, a process that opens the possibility to “[...] develop new meanings and values for their [multilinguals’] codes as they pluralize dominant norms and literacies” (p. 126). These translingual practices delineate “the ability to merge different language resources in situated interactions for new meaning construction” (Canagarajah, 2013b: 1-2).

In summary, the data presented above highlight the importance of understanding the new and creative ways of communication and learning of young plurilingual learners today. For the focal *ChaoXianZu* students, like Chunhee, who were born and raised during/after China’s rapid industrialization in the early 1990s, active and regular use of

multiple (linguistic and multimedia) resources in or out of school contexts is an important part of their lives. While constantly navigating and reconfiguring their plurilingual repertoires as assets and capital, they are actively engaging in various activities in *new social network spaces*, as part of their creative involvement in the development of different communication and learning strategies.

### **Discussion and Implications for Understanding Education for Diversities**

In this paper, we explored how teenagers navigate the complexity of their multiple languages and identities, in the variety of circumstances and contexts of their daily lives (Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Josselson & Harway, 2012), how they weave in and out ascribed, ideal and normative identifications, loyalties and affiliations (Byrd Clark, 2009) and use their agency to create spaces for the inclusion of diverse semiotic resources, complex linguistic practices and new identity performances. We have used the framework of plurilingualism and the concepts of life trajectory and plurilingual competence to analyse the language and literacy practices and experiences of mobility of a group of six ChaoXianZu high school teenagers, all residing in the city of Beijing, China. This group is of particular interest because they share a number of communalities that make them stand apart from other Chinese Koreans in China: they represent a new generation who, over the last decade, have moved away from remote parts of China where their families had been residing in close-knit and largely segregated areas, and had taken full advantage of the Chinese positive and pluralistic language policies that allowed them to run their own schools and educate their children primarily in Korean, thus maintaining a high level of language transmission and practice. In the new context of living in a large city like Beijing, teenagers have had to navigate new social networks and language expectations, confront the challenge of language maintenance, and in so doing have gained self-awareness to challenge assumptions and to cross conceptual boundaries (of language and identity allegiances).

The findings revealed that increased globalization, recent population movements, transnationalism and urbanization, and increased exposure to South Korea and South Korean entertainment, have shifted teenagers' national and group identifications, as well as their have given rise to new forms of investment in their learning new languages like English and/or Japanese (Norton & Gao, 2008). All the focal participants in the study affirmed the benefit of plurilingualism and of being a plurilingual individual, in ways not only beneficial to the person herself, but also to others in a context of intensified transnational flows and globalization (Kim, 2010). Several significant findings related to language practices, learning, and identity development emerged from our study. In particular, the study suggests that these plurilingual teenagers are skilful in utilizing their multiple plurilingual assets, and creatively resort to different communication and learning strategies in different time and spaces. Their plurilingual skills allow them to navigate family paths with more or less fluidity, exhibiting multi-layered levels of increased mobility that allow them to transcend the need to conform to their parents' expectations, surfing across three main intersecting and overlapping spaces:

- 1) *An old comfort zone*: The plurilingual teenagers tend to stay or return to an old comfortable space where they can meet people who share similar linguistic and

- cultural resources and experiences, struggles and dilemma, while prioritizing existing resources;
- 2) *A zone of adjustment*: In this space, the plurilingual teenagers are constantly searching for the possibilities of maximizing all their multiple linguistic and cultural repertoires, and reaping the benefits of being a plurilingual speaker, able to communicate in various languages including Mandarin Chinese and English;
  - 3) *A new fluid and creative zone*: Where the plurilingual teenagers emancipate from expectations, and create new spaces to acknowledge the uniqueness of their multiple language practices and identities. This new space epitomizes how teenagers resist a dual identity paradox in adopting more flexible plurilingual and pluricultural identities and bring in alternative discourses and values as exemplified in their creative appropriation of multilingual literacies (Martin-Jones and Jones, 2000), multimodality and media-technologies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013a) to resist normative representations of languages and identities to communicate with their peers, and learn.

We have argued in this paper that the framework of plurilingualism, and its non-static conceptualisations of plurilingual and pluricultural competence (PPC) and multiple (learners') identities are more apt to capture the mobility and dynamics of language use and identities. Plurilingualism does not describe separate competences in fixed and labelled languages, but views languages as "mobile resources" (Blommaert, 2010: 43) within an integrated repertoire (Lüdi & Py, 2009) that can include translingual practice (Canagarajah, 2013a). While the conceptualisation of PPC puts emphasis on the individual as a social actor with agency, it also maps a trajectory anchored in a "family path" and various forms of mobility: geographical, social and cultural mobility, the latter being defined as "the ability to update, in life choices, perceptions of "elsewhere" expressed in latent form in family history" (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009: 20). A family path here should not be understood as the epitome of preservation of identity, language and culture, or of the need to conform to parental values and norms; but rather as the awareness and the ability to understand and critically reflect on one's social and linguistic trajectory as a form of (learners') capital (Zarate, Lévy & Kramersch, 2011). As stated before, three principles underlie what makes a pluricultural competence: inclusion in a particular family and occupational path, which implies a investment over time; familiarity with otherness, which implies an ability to make choices, to manage risk optionally and to employ diversified strategies within partly compatible social and cultural logics; an understanding of establishment leading to autonomous conduct with respect to orthodoxy (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009). These concepts have proved particularly useful to understand plurilingualism as a repertoire of mobile resources, and to describe patterns of language use, language learning, and multiple identifications of these six ChaoXianZu teenagers. The findings show that while ChaoXianZu teenagers in Beijing tend to accommodate their parents' expectations in terms of language allegiance, fluency, identity, and the view that particular languages should be used and learnt in particular places and times (and therefore, follow in the "family path"), their personal narratives and their ludic use of languages and literacies reveal how, on a deeper level, these teenagers question expectations and limiting linguistic terminology

(such as the convention to adhere to one mother tongue only, or use one language in interactions), thus revealing their agency.

These experiences of previous generation(s) constitute a form of capital, which will be exploited in varying degrees: dream capital, capital formed by rejection of and opposition to family values, usually constructed independently of the plurilingual individual's explicit awareness. This archaeology of family values, which permits the expression of a desire for "elsewhere", or the practice of transgressing the national values instilled by the school. (Coste, Moore & Zarate, 2009: 21).

In this sense also, our study supports previous research that demonstrates the richness of valuing plurilingualism as an asset (Schechter & Cummins, 2003), and the importance of tapping into students' experiences and mobile resources in and outside the classroom as triggers for learning. Our work also underscores the ways in which the use of multimodal technologies, translanguaging and plurilingual interactions open up new configurations of transformative language practices, and new spaces for co-learning (García & Wei, 2014) and empowerment.

## **Conclusion**

The growing number of Koreans who move to urban or coastal areas where Han people are mainly concentrated and are opting to identify as Chinese citizens may less be inclined to identify themselves with the model minority stereotype we described at the beginning of this paper. Furthermore, as more Korean students switch from Korean to Han schools when they move from primary to secondary education, and then to university, how individuals understand and invest their multilingual repertoires and multiple identities is bound to challenge conformity to old values and norms. In these contexts of moving boundaries – intra-territorial and transnational mobilities, life trajectories and transitions, and transformations in communicative systems –, youngsters may grow to view bilingual education in their parents' language and culture less as a means to maintain and preserve their common heritage, and more as a chance of exposure to multiple languages and learning opportunities, and as a significant part of claiming a multilingual identity in an ever-changing and globalized world. This research points to the continued need to complicate the model minority discourse that tends to essentialize ChaoXianZu [ethnic Korean Chinese] as a homogeneous group with shared educational attitudes and success, and to adopt a more complex view and critical approach to the conceptualisations of the 'multi'- in learners' multiple language and identities.

Policy makers and school educators need to take into account the needs that increasing mobility into concentrated urban areas induce for schools and the students attending them. Further studies are clearly needed to better understand how heightened geographical and virtual mobility is bound to affect language use, language learning, group identifications, and educational aspirations, notably from the point of view of teenagers.

Teenagers' perspectives on plurilingualism and multiple identities are indeed still rarely examined in research, and this paper has sought to address this oversight by examining how six plurilingual ChaoXianZu young learners construct their multilingual resources in old and new sociospatial contexts, what value and meaning they assign to



various languages in their repertoires and to learning new languages, and how they engage in complex multiple negotiations of identities and solidarities. This under-researched area is all the more important as these teenagers will become central actors in years to come, and will be at the heart of social transformation. The study questioned the validity of essentialized views of Korean or Chinese “ethnic” identity to describe the mobile and multiple identities of these teenagers. It contributed to bring in alternative discourses and values, as exemplified in their imaginative appropriation of linguistic and cultural spaces, notably as they grow up and emancipate, as new learners in university settings in China and abroad. As plurilingual and pluricultural individuals, teenagers create new spaces and identities for themselves, where social inclusion and language learning are marked by creative language use, translingual literacies, and multiple identifications that move beyond static linguistic boundaries, ideologies and expectations (Marshall & Moore, 2013, Pennycook, 2013; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010 and 2011). As such, they represent a changing population, more transnational and cosmopolitan in nature, and for whom plural identities are neither conflicting nor disruptive, but reflect multiple harmonies and empowerment.

## Notes

(1) Yang (2005: 554) reports that China’s minorities can be categorized into three types based on the existence of a specific writing system and access to bilingual education: (i) *Type 1* includes five minority groups, the Korean, Kazak, Mongolian, Tibetan and Uygur with a combined population of over 24 million who had functional writing systems that were broadly used before the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, and have had regular bilingual education since then; (ii) *Type 2* includes eight minority groups, the Dai, Jingpo, Lisu, Lahu, Miao, Naxi, Va and Yi, with a combined population of 22 million who had functional writing systems in limited use before 1949, and have had only occasional bilingual education since 1949; (iii) *Type 3* includes the remaining 42 groups with a total population of approximately 60 million who had no fully functional writing systems before 1949, and have had limited or no bilingual education since then and have Chinese as their primary or only language of instruction.

(2) In this paper, we use HanYu or Putonghua to indicate the Han-yu Pu-tong-hua [汉语普通话], the standard language commonly used in the P.R. China, especially in all formal settings (e.g., at school and government offices). We also use Han-guo-yu [韩国语] to indicate a Korean variant that is commonly spoken by the people living in the Republic of Korean (or South Korea); the teenage participants in this study considered that HanGuoYu is different from the Chao-xian-yu [朝鲜语], a Korean variant spoken by Koreans in China, which has unique features (including notably specific features of Korean-Chinese code-switchings).

(3) The term *ZhongHua Minzu* is a term that indicates the highest level of identity for all people in Chinese nation-state, where all its citizens have a Chinese national identity; those who are all members of the inclusive Chinese nation. Under the big umbrella of this national identity are the official ethnic identities of China’s fifty-six minzu (Hill & Zhou, 2009: 9).

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## Notes on contributor:

**Meilan Piao Ehlert** is a Ph.D candidate in the doctoral program Languages, Literacies and Cultures in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University (Canada). She is a member of the ChaoXianZu community described in this paper who immigrated to Canada for her studies. She teaches Japanese as a foreign language in Vancouver. Her doctoral research focus on the politics of multilingual education in China, and on the learning experiences and academic success of multilingual ChaoXianZu students learning English and/or Japanese in public high schools in the Heilongjiang province, on the outskirts of the Yanbian Korean Autonomous Prefecture in the Northeast of China.

**Danièle Moore** is a Professor in educational sociolinguistics in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, and a Research Director at the Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3, France. Her research areas include the study of plurilingualism, multilingual language acquisition, curriculum development and teacher training in multicultural contexts. Her most recent research include investigations of academic literacy development and second language acquisition among Asian undergraduate students in a North American university, and of trilingual literacy development among Chinese primary school children in French immersion in Canada. She is currently the co-Editor of the bilingual journal *The Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, and of *Recherches et applications – Le Français dans le monde*.

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