A SURVEY OF LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDES OF HUI HERITAGE LANGUAGE USERS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to review the conservation and transmission of the Hui dialects, utilizing the "inheritance language theory" that has surfaced internationally, whilst further appreciating the distinctiveness and significance of minority languages. The survey is executed by means of both empirical and quantitative techniques followed by assessment of the findings through SPSS statistical software, to manifest genuine situation of the Hui language inheritance.The survey results indicate that Xi'an Hui heritage language speakers possess an intermediate level of dialect proficiency or above. Furthermore, their listening and speaking skills outperformed their reading and writing abilities. Their dialects are frequently used, and they demonstrate an upper intermediate level of learning attitudes and motivation. The motivation and attitude of inherited dialect speakers are affected by various backgrounds, including gender, place of residence, and partner's ethnicity. In light of these findings, the author suggests protective measures for minority inherited languages at different levels and from various perspectives.

1. Introduction

Due to extensive ethnic integration and urban modernization, Chinese has become increasingly prevalent among the Hui community and is now considered their primary language. However, some elderly members still use Arabic and Persian, and some middle-aged Hui individuals occasionally utilize these languages, although infrequently. The younger generation of Hui individuals primarily use the Chinese, yet they possess the ability to comprehend Arabic and Persian. This phenomenon is a widespread occurrence among the Hui community, yet its study has not been extensively explored by academics. This inherited language phenomenon has been

observed in several generations of the Hui. In recent years, the study of the Hui culture has become a topic of interest for many scholars, specifically concerning their language usage. The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the inheritance and progression of the Hui people's inherited language. Specifically, it examines the use of the inherited language across three generations of the Hui people in Xi'an.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Previous Studies of Hui Dialect

As an ethnic minority, not many scholars have studied the Hui dialect.

Ni Dabai（1988）researched the ancestry of the Hui community in Hainan Province, China. Liu Yingsheng（2003）has conducted research into the 800-year-long evolution of the Hui Chinese language, which spans from its Persian roots to its present state. Li Juan et al. (2009) examined the Hui language with regards to ethnic identity. Ma Jie（2010）talked about the use and development trend of special terms of the Hui.Li Shengxin (2012) examined the connotations of ethnic religion through the lens of Hui proverbs.

These articles either take the Hui language as their theme or use it as part of their research topic, and all of them study and describe the language from a certain point or a certain aspect of the Hui language.

2.2 Definition of Heritage Language

The theoretical basis of this study is the "Heritage Language Theory" represented by Valdès, which defines heritage language learners and non-heritage language learners in terms of the "home use" of the language. The concept of HeritageLanguage (HL) was first introduced by the Ontario Heritage Language Project Group in Canada in the 1970s (Hornberg & Wang, 2008), and then in the 1990s it was widely accepted and promoted by American academics concerned with language maintenance, language revitalization and non-English language teaching (Valdès, 2008). It was then widely accepted and promoted in the 1990s by American academics concerned with language maintenance, language revitalization and non-English language teaching (Valdès, 2008). In the United States, Fishman defines Heritage Language as all ancestral languages other than non-English languages that have some special family connection to the learner, including the languages of indigenous peoples, colonial countries and immigrant languages (Fishman, 2001). According to Fishman's division, Native languages are the Indian languages spoken by the native peoples of the American continent; Colonial languages are the languages spoken by European colonists prior to American independence (e.g., French, German,

Italian); and Immigrant languages are any of the languages spoken by immigrants who arrived from countries around the world after American independence (e.g., Chinese for Chinese, Japanese for Japanese, Arabic for Arabic). Polinsky & Kagan (2007) suggest that heritage language can be defined in both broad and narrow sense. They argue that Fishman's previous definition of heritage language belongs to broad definition, which is part of family and cultural transmission, where the language may no longer be spoken at home and the speaker of the heritage language may not speak it and has to learn it as a second language learner. Heritage language is narrowly defined as "the first language that is not fully acquired because the individual has moved on to another subject language". The narrow definition focuses on the linguistic competence of the learner of the heritage language, such as a degree of competence in the heritage language rather than just a family heritage bond, which is closer to Valdès' (2008) view.

2.3 Previous Studies of Heritage Language

With the development of internationalization, multicultural development strategies and the need to cultivate multilingual talents, research in the field of heritage language education has developed rapidly in the last decade or so, especially in the United States, and has gradually become a sub-discipline of applied linguistics.

Guadalupe Valdés (2008) proposes that the promotion of heritage language teaching is a prospect to broaden the study on second language learning and teaching. By doing so, it can address the most challenging difficulties in foreign language education at present, and potentially shape the education of linguistic minority students across the globe. As a result, this will improve comprehension of human languages. Joseph Lo Bianco (2008) discusses the language policies implemented in Scotland and Australia, analyses the current state of intergenerational language preservation within political discourse, explores the relationship between citizenship and language policy, and highlights the complexity of developing heritage languages when national policies do not provide support. Lo Bianco offers insights on the challenges associated with language preservation and advocates for stronger political frameworks to promote linguistic diversity. Li Wei (1994) suggests that an individual's sense of racial identity and relationship with members of their race is positively correlated with their level of heritage language proficiency. This is because members of the same race are better able to understand and connect with cultural values, ethics, and behavioral patterns of the group.

The study of heritage languages in China is still in early stages. Wang Yanyan (1998) examines the current state and challenges facing HL education in Canada from a HL standpoint.Wu Wen (2012) provides a succinct definition of health literacy, tracing its historical progression and

presenting seminal research findings. He suggests integrating HL theory with the current situation in China. Cao Xianwen (2017) analyzes the background of the emergence of HL education, summarizes the development of overseas HL education research, and discusses the hot issues in overseas HL education research. Guo Xi (2017) provides an objective overview of the nature, characteristics, ecology and types of HL transmission. She asserts that the construction and maintenance of HL awareness is crucial for HL transmission education. Shao Mingming (2018) conducts a systematic review of literature on domestic and international heritage language learning from the past two decades. The study analyses research from six different aspects and compared the variations in HL studies between domestic and foreign contexts. Current issues are identified and recommendations are provided for future research in this area.

After reviewing the literature, it is discovered that research on heritage languages in the domestic context has progressed at a slower pace than in foreign countries, and the research scope is limited. However, there is promising progress as research on teaching and empirical evidence has moved from the initial theoretical phase, indicating a positive trend. Therefore, this study analyses and examines the Xi'an Hui heritage language from an empirical viewpoint, filling the void in empirical research on heritage languages in China.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

The study's theoretical foundation is Valdès' narrow theory of heritage language, which categorizes the three generations of Xi'an Hui inherited speakers in relation to the "family use" of their language. Dörnyei's three-level theory of motivation is the primary theoretical basis for the exploration of language attitudes and motivation, and is supplemented by Gardner's traditional theory of motivation for second language acquisition.

(1) What is the frequency of dialects and Mandarin being utilized in day-to-day communication among the Hui population in Xi'an?

(2) How do the attitudes and motivations of the Xi'an Hui people towards their heritage language impact its usage?

(3) What implications do the characteristics and development trends of the Xi'an Hui people's heritage language have for the management of minority language protection in China?

3.2 Research Subjects

This study explores the factors that affect the acquisition of the heritage language among 261

individuals residing in Xi'an Muslim Square through a questionnaire. Prior to formulating the questionnaire, a preliminary survey was conducted, with the assistance of local residents, primarily gathering data on the subjects' gender, age, and location of residence.

To enhance the objectivity of the research findings and ensure homogeneity within the population sample, 261 inherited speakers from three generations were carefully selected. Specifically, the first generation comprised individuals born in Xi'an Muslim Square to parents who had resided in Xi'an since the 1940s-1960s. The second generation comprises those born to parents who have lived in Xi'an since the 1960s-1980s and have received some level of cultural education in China. The third generation comprises those born to parents who have lived in Xi'an since the 1980s-2000s, completed their education in China from kindergarten to high school, or hold a university degree or higher.

3.3 Research Tool

Questionnaire Design

Questionnaires are designed for each of the four areas of language use, language acquisition, motivation and attitude to learning.

Questionnaire 1 is consisted of three sections: basic information about the subject, language use and self-assessment of dialect competence. The first section contains basic information on gender, age, place of residence, length of residence, partner's ethnicity and self-identification. The second section checks off the language they usually use in these scenarios from their family environment, social environment and personal environment. The third section breaks down the questions according to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, with only two questions for each language item.

Questionnaire 2, the Motivation for Learning Questionnaire. Traditionally, motivation has been categorized into integrative and instrumental motivation according to Gardner and Lambert's theory of motivation. In this study, the author draws on Gardner and Lamber's second language acquisition scale and adds four more intuitive and specific factors that influence motivation formation, based on the characteristics of the heritage language and the existing classification model. These include "intrinsic interest motivation", "externally demanding motivation", "social responsibility motivation" and "personal development motivation ". The "social responsibility motivation" is added because the Hui people enjoy a certain degree of special "preferential treatment" in studying and living in China under the state's policy of supporting ethnic minorities, such as the "minority matriculation policy The "parental support motive" is due to the fact that the ethnic minority people enjoy a certain degree of "preferential treatment" in their studies in China under the state's policy of helping them. The "parental support motive" is due to

the fact that parents' expectations of their children's language use and learning vary from age to age due to the impact of traditional attitudes and modern new thinking.

Questionnaire 3, the Attitude to Learning Questionnaire. The main reference is the research method of Tao Deqing (1998) and Lai Baozhen, which investigates the attitudes of Xi'an Hui people towards the inherited Hui dialect, taking into account their own characteristics and the actual living environment. There are four items: cognitive component, affective component, behavioral analysis and overcoming difficulties.

The questions in the self-assessment section of Questionnaire 1, Questionnaire 2 and Questionnaire 3 were all asked using a Likert scale (selecting items on a five-point scale). "5" = completely agree, "4" = somewhat agree, "3" = average, "2" = not quite agree, "1" = completely disagree. "5 is the highest score and 1 is the lowest score. The data collected was calculated using the weighted average method. According to Oxford's model, a score above 3.5 is considered high, a mean below 3.5 and above 2.5 is considered medium, and a mean below 2.5 is considered low.

SPSS

The data collected is analyzed in this study using both Excel and SPSS software. The analysis methods include descriptive statistics and correlation analysis.

For the descriptive statistics method, the correlation values designed are the maximum value "max", the minimum value "min", the mean value "mean" and the standard deviation ("standard deviation", "sd"). The standard deviation is a figure that reflects the degree of aggregation dispersion of a data set. The larger the standard deviation, the greater the variation between samples, while the smaller the standard deviation, the greater the uniformity and less the variability between samples.

The correlation analysis method, using SPSS 22.0, is used to collate the questionnaire data and analyze carefully, covering descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficient analysis, to point out the factors influencing the acquisition of the Xi'an Hui heritage language and the correlations between them.

3.4 Aim of the study

The Hui is a prominent ethnic minority in China and coexist primarily with the Han Chinese. Attention should be paid to the development of the Hui heritage language, yet there is presently inadequate research on even the language's heritage.

This study aims to present the "heritage language theory" developed abroad and to reconsider the

particularity and significance of the Hui heritage language. The objective of this study is to gather authentic data on the progress of the Hui heritage language via surveys and interviews. The aim is to assess the development of the Hui heritage language and create a point of reference for safeguarding it.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Basic Statistics of Survey Respondents

This study divides the basic profile of Xi'an Hui inherited speakers into three modules: basic personal information, self-assessment of dialect level and dialect usage.

Basic Personal Information

The following table is the data collected through the questionnaire data.

Table 1 Personal Information of Male and Female

Gender	Male	Female
Amount	121	140
Frequency	46.36%	53.64%
Place of Residence	Inside Xi'an Muslim Quarter	Outside Xi'an Muslim Quarter
Amount	203	58
Frequency	77.78%	22.22%
Duration of Residence	Over ten years in the Muslim Quarter	Within ten years in the Muslim Quarter
Amount	236	25
Frequency	90.42%	9.58%

As shown above, Table 1 shows that of the 261 respondents to the survey, girls held a relative advantage, with 140 (53.64% of the total sample), while boys accounted for 121 (46.46% of the total sample). The majority of the respondents lived in Hui Min Street, with 203 people, accounting for 77.78% of the total sample. The number of Hui who had lived there for more than ten years was 236, accounting for 90.42% of the total sample. This trend shows the characteristics of small clusters and large mixes of the Hui in China, and provides some convenience for this study.

In terms of age composition, in order to comply with the research objectives of the study on the mastery of the heritage language of the three generations of the Hui people, we tried to involve every age group in the survey, but due to the fact that the actual situation of the 1941-1960 group in terms of mastering modern technology deviated from the author's estimation, only 41 people

participated in the questionnaire, accounting for 15.71% of the total sample. The numbers of the 1961-1980 and 1981-2000 generations were more balanced, with 116 and 104 participants respectively. Given that the use of the dialect by the respondents' partners may have an impact on the research questions, the questionnaire also investigated the ethnicity of their partners, of whom 205 were all Muslim, while 31 were single and 25 had non-Muslim partners.

Table 2 Personal Information of Three Generations

Birth Age Range	1941-1960	1961-1980	1981-2000
Amount	41	116	104
Frequency	15.71%	44.44%	39.85%
Mate Ethnicity	Muslim	Non-Muslim	Single
Amount	205	25	31
Frequency	78.54%	9.58%	11.88%

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Self-assessment of Dialect Level

The level test paper used in this study is based on 46 words selected from the Xi'an Hui Dialect for the collection of Hui inherited vocabulary in alphabetical order from A to Z, which is used as a reference to assess the level of the dialect.

The self-assessment of Hui dialect inheritance language proficiency consists of 8 items on a 5-point Likert scale, which are divided into listening ("I can understand common, familiar conversations in the dialect" and "I can fully understand the contents of the scripture class"), speaking ("I occasionally use the Muslim dialect in everyday conversation" and "I can use the Xi'an Muslim dialect frequently in everyday conversation"), reading ("I can read simple and common Muslim dialect materials" and "I can read and understand all of the materials in the Xi'an Muslim dialect") and write ("I can give simple descriptions of people and events in the Muslim dialect" and "I can write letters and essays independently in Chinese").

As can be seen from Table 3, the self-assessment of their Hui heritage language proficiency was at a high level, with the valuation of listening and speaking proficiency being significantly higher than that of reading and writing proficiency. From a grouping perspective, Hui heritage language speakers used the dialect most frequently in their daily communication and during the learning process of the sutra class lectures, as can be seen from the results of the self-assessment, with the most frequently used pathways being listening and speaking.

Table 3 Self-assessment of Dialect Level

Topics/Options	Totally agree	Agree more	Generally	Disagree	Completely disagree	Average score
I can understand common and familiar everyday conversations in the dialect.	81.06%	13.26%	4.92%	0.38%	0.38%	4.74
I can fully understand the contents of a class in the scriptural language (mosque scripture class).	39.02%	20.08%	31.82%	6.06%	3.03%	3.86
I occasionally use the Hui dialect in everyday conversation.	54.55%	15.15%	14.02%	11.74%	4.55%	4.03
I can use the Xi'an Hui dialect frequently in everyday conversation.	66.29%	15.15%	13.26%	3.03%	2.27%%	4.4
I can read and understand simple and common materials in the Hui dialect.	57.95%	16.29%	18.56%	5.68%	1.52%	4.23
I can read and understand all of the material taught in the Scripture class at the mosque.	32.2%	18.18%	32.58%	10.98%	6.06%	3.59
I can give simple descriptions of people and events in the Hui dialect.	57.95%	17.05%	18.18%	5.3%	1.52%	4.25
Ican write letters or articles independently in the Hui dialect.	35.98%	17.42%	26.52%	11.36%	8.71%	3.61

From the visual data, it can be seen that people think they are most able to use the dialect for daily communication and can basically understand the lectures in Jing'tang with an average score of 3.86 and a lower score of 4.74 for daily communication; for daily use, the average score is concentrated around 4 and will use the Hui dialect frequently in daily communication; in terms of reading, the reading rate of basic simple Hui reading materials is higher than the average

scores for the writing section were 4.25 and 3.61 respectively, with those who could give simple descriptions of people and events in Hui dialect scoring higher than those who could write letters or essays in Hui dialect independently.

The distribution of the scores on the self-assessment of Hui dialect proficiency shows that the Hui dialect heritage language levels of the Xi'an Hui group are all above the intermediate level, but the development of speech skills in the dialect is uneven, with listening skills better than reading and writing skills.

Situation of Heritage Language Usage

Table 4 Heritage Language Usage Table

		Hui dialect	Mandarin	Dialects mixed with Mandarin	Others
Family Environment	Communication with parents	84.09%	3.79%	12.12%	0%
	Communication with grandparents	87.5%	3.03%	8.33%	1.14%
	Communication with siblings	77.27%	6.44%	16.29%	0%
	Communication with children	51.89%	18.56%	25.38%	4.17%
	Communication with spouse	71.97%	12.12%	14.77%	1.14%
	Communication with grandchildren	41.67%	28.41%	23.11%	6.82%
	Say it when eating with the whole family	75.38%	7.2%	17.42%	0%
Social Environment	Saying when buying something in a shop	22.73%	40.53%	36.74%	0%
	Say when ordering food at a restaurant	29.55%	35.98%	33.33%	1.14%
	Communication with neighbors	60.23%	18.18%	21.21%	0.38%
	Communication with friends	43.56%	17.42%	38.64%	0.38%
	Communication with colleagues/classmates	30.3%	35.98%	32.58%	1.14%
Personal Environment	Use when writing	14.02%	69.32%	16.29%	0.38%
	When thinking about a problem in my head	49.24%	31.82%	18.94%	0%
	When you are in a hurry	63.64%	19.32%	17.05%	0%
	For Internet access	13.26%	62.12%	21.97%	2.65%

Table 4 shows that the language use of the Xi'an Hui group is selective and targeted, i.e. they use

different languages in different contexts and for different speakers. The use of the Hui dialect is higher in the family and personal environment than in the social environment.

In the family setting, the Hui dialect is predominantly spoken, with grandparents using it exclusively or in conjunction with Mandarin. Parents utilize it to a high degree at 87.5%. Additionally, 18.56% of parents have a respectable comprehension of standard Mandarin, which facilitates communication between children and their parents in Mandarin. When communicating with siblings of the same generation, 77.27% choose the dialect, 6.44% use Italian Mandarin, and 16.29% use a combination of both dialects. Students who are taught in Mandarin as the medium of instruction in mainstream schools return to their families and Hui communities to connect with their own people in their own dialects. Their bilingualism is developed by their peers who are in the same circumstance.

In social situations, 40.53% and 35.98% of students favor Mandarin when visiting shops and ordering food in restaurants, with only 22.73% preferring the Hui dialect for shops and 36.74% opting for a mix of dialects. The text adheres to conventional structure, maintains consistent citation, and adopts a value-neutral tone. The language is precise, grammatically correct, and independent of subjective evaluations. The writing is free from complex terminology, biased language, filler words, and informal expressions. The formal register is maintained, with clear positions expressed through hedging. Causal connections link statements, creating logical structure and flow. When ordering food, 29.55% of individuals use their own dialect, while 33.33% use a combination of both dialects. Technical term abbreviations will be explained when initially used. This phenomenon may be attributed to the difference in the living environment, as the majority of study participants reside in Muslim neighborhoods, surrounded by Muslim individuals. The prevalence of the Hui dialect in this social setting suggests that Hui communities usually frequent Hui streets and converse in their native dialect.

In personal settings, individuals often exhibit a tendency to blend languages resulting in bilingual language use when alone. A mere 14.02% of students preferred composing their written work in Hui dialect, with the majority of 69.32% selecting Mandarin, and the remainder utilizing a combination of Italian and Chinese. Consequently, 18.94% of the students resorted to combining dialects during cognitive activities. The language employed by individuals in moments of haste is often subconscious. The significant difference in likelihood between employing the Hui dialect and Mandarin in such situations shows a certain language bias among the Hui group. When accessing contemporary resources, including the internet and television programmes, individuals tend to use both dialects. This implies they watch television and communicate online in both Mandarin and their respective dialects, thereby guaranteeing an understanding of the society and the world that both dialects represent.

In various contexts, namely at home, in society, or in personal settings, the Hui community mostly employs dialects. Nevertheless, there exists a non-monolingual usage of the language.

4.2 Motivation for Learning the Heritage Language in the Hui Community

Table 5 Distribution of Heritage Language Learning Motivation among Hui

Type of motivation	Intrinsic interest motivation	Motivation by external demands	Motivation for social responsibility	Motivation for personal development
N	261	261	261	261
Mean	4.17	4.13	3.81	3.52
Std. Deviation	1.03510	0.73670	0.74732	1.0372

As can be seen from Table 5, intrinsic interest motivation was the strongest for inherited speakers, with a mean value of 4.17, and external requirement motivation was comparable to intrinsic interest motivation, with a mean value of 4.13. Respondents showed strong agreement with these two motivations, which can be said to be their main motivation for learning Hui heritage languages. This is followed by social responsibility motivation and personal development motivation, with mean values of 3.981 and 3.52 respectively. In general, these two motivations do not play a major role and can be considered as general motivations.

The results of the interviews also confirm the author's findings, with intrinsic interest motivation and external requirement motivation being mentioned several times.

Mr. Mu (the first generation):

...because I grew up in a Muslim street, I have been influenced by Muslim culture since I was a child, and it is hard not to be influenced by it in this environment, and I feel proud to be a Muslim myself ...

Miss Ma (the third generation):

"When I visit my relatives during the New Year holidays, I feel that if I don't speak the dialect, I feel lonely and out of place in the lively atmosphere. And if I don't speak the dialect I can't communicate with my grandfather or grandmother ...... This is a particularly painful thing."

Table 6 Distribution of Heritage Language Learning Motivation among Hui

Type of motivation	Intrinsicinterest motivation	Motivation by external	Motivation for social	Motivation for personal

		demands	responsibility	development
Male	121	121	121	121
Mean	4.45	4.06	3.16	3.61
Std. Deviation	0.82	1.07	1.11	0.71
Female	140	140	140	140
Mean	4.10	4.33	3.92	3.32
Std. Deviation	0.84	0.97	0.96	1.08

The difference in the influence of gender on language is a fact that has been well understood by both linguistic and psychological communities. In Table 6 we can clearly see that in the Hui group, the female group scored somewhat higher than the male group in both external demand motivation and social responsibility motivation, with a mean of 4.33 for female and 4.06 for male, with female scoring 0.27 higher than male. for intrinsic interest motivation and personal development motivation, the male group scored higher, with the gap essentially being closer to 0.3 or so. In line with the findings of numerous previous studies, female motivation and male motivation can vary depending on the type of motivation.

Table 7 Distribution of Learning Motivation of Different Three Generations of Hui Inherited Speakers

Type of motivation	Intrinsic interest motivation	Motivation by external demands	Motivation for social responsibility	Motivation for personal development
1941-1960	41	41	41	41
Mean	4.12	4.36	4.16	3.75
Std. Deviation	0.85	0.97	1.03	1.14
1961-1980	116	116	116	116
Mean	4.54	4.13	3.89	3.32
Std. Deviation	0.94	0.91	0.87	1.15
1981-2000	104	104	104	104
Mean	3.85	3.73	3.39	3.24
Std. Deviation	0.74	0.87	0.96	0.67

The maintenance of a heritage language is influenced by various external factors and personal motivations. Practical reasons are just one element that drives usage, along with the importance one places on the language and its benefits to the individual user(Anat Stavans & Maya Ashkenazi,2020).Regarding the value ascribed to HL, there appears to be broad agreement across all generations that there is a predominance of motivations. However, the first generation also attributes high external demand, social responsibility, and intrinsic value to their HL. They derive great motivation for practical, ideological, general, and personal development purposes from acquiring, using, and preserving the Hui dialect. Thus, the first generation reports a more

comprehensive and natural way of life in their HL. The third generation attributes the least motivational value to the HL, with practical benefits such as travelling, music, and socializing being their primary focus. In contrast, the second generation finds intrinsic interest in the HL, with little importance placed on practical benefits.

4.3 Attitude for Learning the Heritage Language in the Hui Community

Table 8 Distribution of Heritage Language Learning Attitude among Hui

Type of motivation	Cognitive component	Emotional component	Behavioral analysis	Overcoming difficulties
N	261	261	261	261
Mean	3.88	3.69	4.09	3.52
Std. Deviation	0.92	0.74	0.79	1.04

The means of all items on the four indicators of respondents' learning attitudes (awareness component, affective component, behavioral analysis and overcoming difficulties) were greater than 3.5, indicating that the Xi'an Hui group has a relatively high attitude towards learning the heritage language in general. The means of the six items in the table range from 3.52 - 4.09, which shows that the learning attitudes of Xi'an Hui speakers are moderately high in terms of structural characteristics. The mean values of these items show an almost stable trend in the hierarchy. In terms of the standard deviation of the individual items, the strongest discrete trend is for the overcoming difficulties (s. d.=1.04), followed by the cognitive component (s. d.=0.92), the affective component is closer to the behavioral analysis (s. d.=0.74, 0.79), and the weakest discrete trend is for the affective component (s. d.=0.74).

It is clear from the above data that learners of the Hui heritage language take exams and grades seriously but are not worried about them after learning the Hui dialect. The reason for this may be that the Hui dialect learners have grown up in the Hui Min Street, an immersive environment that is very conducive to learning the heritage language, and for them learning the dialect or the scriptural language is not a burden or task, but a part of their daily life. However, for those who live outside the Muslim Street, or whose family members are more non-Muslim, learning the dialect will take some time for them.

Mr. Gui (the second generation):

I don't think learning the dialect is just about surviving or adapting better to your surroundings. In fact, when we were young we would often go to the mosque in the summer and winter to learn the scriptural language, which was a free course, and we would let our children go too. In fact, I

probably wouldn't have thought speaking the dialect was a strange thing before, but then after I worked I slowly realized that I was speaking many expressions that many of my Han Chinese friends didn't know, and this is probably another reason why the dialect exists, it will make the Hui culture more unique and make the friends in Xi'an Muslim Square more cohesive .....

Table 9 Distribution of heritage language Learning Attitude among Hui

Type of attitude	Cognitive component	Emotional component	Behavioral analysis	Overcoming difficulties
Male	121	121	121	121
Mean	4.04	3.69	4.16	3.50
Std. Deviation	0.49	0.64	0.78	0.75
Female	140	140	140	140
Mean	3.78	3.71	3.92	3.53
Std. Deviation	0.75	0.67	0.88	0.97

With the exception of the cognitive component and behavioral analysis, females had higher mean scores than males on the other two attitudes to learning. But the most significant difference was for the cognitive component, where males scored higher and the gap was larger, indicating that males identify more significantly with the Hui dialect; for the two learning attitudes, the affective component and overcoming difficulties, the difference was not significant, indicating that in this respect, males and females have the same attitude towards learning the Hui heritage language.

Table 10 Distribution of Learning Motivation of Different Three Generations of Hui Inherited Speakers

Type of Attitude	Cognitive component	Emotional component	Behavioral analysis	Overcoming difficulties
1941-1960	41	41	41	41
Mean	3.81	3.73	3.94	3.54
Std. Deviation	0.79	0.77	0.98	0.67
1961-1980	116	116	116	116
Mean	3.85	3.70	4.12	3.57
Std. Deviation	0.99	0.73	0.88	0.69
1981-2000	104	104	104	104
Mean	3.69	3.67	3.88	3.52
Std. Deviation	1.14	0.98	1.24	0.99

Maintaining heritage language highlights the benefits of being multilingual, including improved mental flexibility, metalinguistic ability, social and emotional development, a stronger sense of identity and increased cultural awareness (Reyes&Moll, 2010). Even those with limited

proficiency in their heritage language often embrace identities associated with their language, seamlessly transitioning between languages to adopt new personas (Canagarajah,2022).

There are no subjective evaluations. In terms of attitudes towards learning, there is no significant difference among the three generations of Hui when compared to motivation. Nevertheless, the mean scores for attitudes towards learning among the first and second generations are higher than the third generation, notably concerning cognitive components and behavioral analysis.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Major Finding

This study uses a combination of both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative study used a questionnaire to collect data. The target number of valid questionnaires was 261, which investigated the status of language use, attitudes, motivation and proficiency in the use of the heritage language among Hui people in Xi'an. A qualitative study was conducted using interviews, with snowball sampling of interviewees from different generations, to investigate the reasons for the formation of the family language environment and the sources of motivation for learning.

The study's primary findings are as follows: The Hui dialect heritage language levels of the Xi'an Hui group are all above intermediate level, according to their self-assessment. However, speech skills development in the dialect is uneven, with listening skills better than reading and writing. Additionally, the Xi'an Hui group selectively and specifically uses different languages in various contexts and for different speakers. Hui dialect is mainly used in the primary nuclear family, whereas Mandarin is more prevalent among individuals within different social circles. The combined usage of Hui dialect and Mandarin is highest among secondary family members and quite common among members of social groups. An increasing number of first and second-generation groups are communicating with their grandchildren in Mandarin instead of Hui dialect. Even third-generation groups are using other languages for their children's language. Secondly, the motivation of inherited Xi'an Hui speakers was generally positive and at a medium to high level. Gender played a role in motivation, with females and males demonstrating varying motivational factors. Additionally, different generations reported different aspects of their heritage language, with the first generation highlighting a more holistic and natural way of life. The third generation assigns minimal primary motivation to the HL, instead deriving practical benefits such as travelling, music, and socializing. Conversely, the second generation attributes intrinsic interest motivation to the HL, and only finds limited practical benefits. The Xi'an Hui heritage language students possess favorable learning dispositions, and their attitudes towards learning are commendable. When comparing learning attitudes across genders, females

outscored males on two of the dimensions, excluding cognitive and behavioral aspects. The mean scores for attitudes towards learning are generally higher in the first- and second-generation groups compared to the third generation, particularly in the domains of cognitive components and behavioral analysis. Additionally, the paper investigated the correlation between speakers' personal information, self-assessed language proficiency, language use, motivation, and learning attitudes to determine their potential influence on language use. The study found that attitudes and prior language knowledge have a predominant influence on language use. The paper refrains from including subjective evaluations and maintains a clear, concise, and logically structured writing style with technical term abbreviations explained upon first use. Common academic sections are included with factual and unambiguous titles. The language remains formal, objective, and free from biased or emotional language, employing passive tone and impersonal construction, with consistent technical terms and precise word choice. Furthermore, the writing adheres to style guides, with consistent citation and clear marking of quotes, while remaining free from grammatical and punctuation errors. Individuals exhibiting greater proficiency in Hui dialect report using Mandarin to a lesser extent, whilst those with advanced knowledge of Hui culture use both languages interchangeably. Additionally, the frequency of Hui heritage language application in daily life correlates positively with an improved level of language proficiency.

The degree of dialect usage is directly linked to attitudes towards the heritage language. When individuals have a higher level of proficiency in the Hui heritage language, their attitudes towards it become more positive. Even though the examination of the relationship between language environment and Chinese language attitudes did not prove significant.

5.2 Insights on Heritage Language Policy

Family language policy is a centripetal force to enhance HL. The language policy of a family, grounded in ideology, maintenance and practice (Spolsky, 1999), can ensure the sustainability of the HL in immigrants who migrate to countries where that language not only is a minority language but also is affected by external forces such as a community, an institution (like school or youth movement), a nation-state on all its enforcements and affordances for maintaining the HL (Anat Stavans & Maya Ashkenazi, 2020).

Language education is the primary means of cultural transmission, but for a long time minority language education was not valued and had no place in the traditional education system, a situation that only changed in the 1950s. In 1951, a UNESCO expert meeting focused for the first time on language education for children in developing countries, advocating the use of the mother tongue as the language of instruction in the classroom, arguing that it was the best language to teach children for the purpose of cultural transmission. Although China has made great achievements in the way of legislative protection, there are still shortcomings, such as the

lack of concrete implementation steps, the content of the provisions is relatively general and vague, the scope of rights protection is relatively narrow, the feasibility and operability is still lacking, the implementation is not strong enough, and so on. In the future, it should be further strengthened from different perspectives of legislation, enforcement and supervision, especially the legal remedy system needs to be improved, not only to achieve "compliance with the law", but also to formulate severe punitive measures against all violations. (Yang, 2018).

The language preservation project is a systematic project and a long-term humanistic project. We should adhere to the basic principle of ethnic equality, unify our understanding and make concerted efforts to consolidate the language resources obtained in the first phase of the language preservation project, continue to co-ordinate and integrate resources, implement the Party and government's wise decision to "scientifically protect the languages and scripts of all ethnic groups", and actively explore a sustainable development path for the protection and development of minority languages.

In summary, minority languages are an important intangible cultural heritage in China and have significant research value. Linguistics provides us with a new perspective on the preservation and development of minority languages. According to the linguistic perspective, we need to enhance the awareness of minority people to preserve and develop their own languages, create an environment for the use of minority languages, make full use of the technology and tools of the information age to preserve and protect minority languages, and strengthen the research on minority languages.

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