CURRENT HMONG PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SPEAKING,
READING, AND WRITING ABILITY AND CULTURAL
VALUES AS RELATED TO LANGUAGE
AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

by

Vicky Xiong-Lor
B.A. (California State University, Fresno) 1995
M.A. (Fresno Pacific University) 2003

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctorate in Education

Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at Fresno State
Kremen School of Education and Human Development

California State University, Fresno
2015
CURRENT HMONG PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR SPEAKING, READING, AND WRITING ABILITY AND CULTURAL VALUES AS RELATED TO LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL MAINTENANCE

Abstract

The literature showed that one language is lost every 2 weeks, and that by the end of the 21st century, there would only be 100 languages left in the world. The Hmong people are one of the newest refugees from Laos. They came to America 40 years ago. According to Pfeifer, Sullivan, Yang, and Yang (2013), there are about eight million Hmong people worldwide, and 256,430 of them live in the United States. Today, the Hmong students are losing their language at an alarming rate. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current perceptions held by Hmong people ages 18 and older about the Hmong language and whether or not it should and could be maintained and passed on to future generations. This study hopes to create awareness in the community and prevent the Hmong language from disappearing from the Ethnologue. A sequential mixed methods design was used to collect the data. Findings showed that respondents perceived the Hmong language as important and would like to see it preserved for future generations.
Copyright by
Vicky Xiong-Lor
2015
California State University, Fresno
Krement School of Education and Human Development
Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

Vicky Xiong-Lor

It was defended on
May 7, 2015
and approved by:

____________________________________
Susan Tracz, Chair
Coordinator of Research, DPELFS
Graduate Programs Coordinator

____________________________________
Lynnette Zelezny
Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

____________________________________
Laura Alamillo
Literacy, Early, Bilingual, and Special Education

____________________________________
Finian McGinn
Former Director of Bilingual Program, CSUF
Franciscan School of Theology
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first thank my parents, Mai Yang and Wa Tou Xiong. In the following paragraph is a message to them in Hmong, the language in which they speak, read, and write and dream in: Ua tsaug, kuv niamb kuv txiv, uas neb pub txoj sia rau kuv thibab ua kab ua noog cawm kuv dim ntawm txoj kev mob kev ntsaj, kev ploj kev tuag thauam kuv yau thiab yog ib tug me nyuam xya hli xwb. Txiv, ua kuj tsaug koj tho kev thiab coj peb tuaj rau Thaib Teb thiab Teb Chaws Mes Kas no es kuv thiaj li muaj txoj kev mus nrog luag kawm ntaub kawm ntauv. Kuv hlub kuv niamb neb tshaj plaws tsis muaj dab tsi yuav los pauv tau neb lub txiaj ntsim thiab dag zog tu kuv.

Next, I want to thank my husband and children for their unwavering support in the last three years. Kyle (Tsav Yeej), I know that if I were married to any other Hmong men, my dream of ever getting an education would have died the day I got married. Because of you, and your love for me, I’ve been able to chase after my educational dreams and for that I thank you. I love you and cannot find any words in any language to thank you for allowing me the chance to prove to myself and other Hmong women that a doctorate degree is possible for all who believe in themselves. To my three children, Joshua, Brandon, and Rachel: I did this for the three of you. You are all very intelligent children and Dad and I know that your dreams will come true. We love you so much and you are my inspiration. I went back to school so that I would have other options to provide you with the best education and a wonderful life experience.

Father Finian McGinn, thank you for reminding me to chase after my dreams. Thank you for your love, support, endless prayers, and for serving as a committee member on my dissertation. My dream of earning a doctorate degree
started out as just a dream, but it was because of you that it was realized. You are a constant source of support, and you are truly a Godsend. May God continue to bless you with great health and the best that life has to offer.

Last, but not least, to Dr. Tracz, my dissertation chair, and committee members, Dr. Alamillo, and Dr. Zelezny. I appreciate all your time spent working with me tirelessly and reading my work into the late hours of the night. Your suggestions and expertise has enabled me to complete my degree in the time allotted and for that I don’t even know where to begin to thank you all. I appreciate your time and energy serving as my chair and committee members.

Thank you, Maika and all the Hmong students and parents of the Hmong Culture and Literacy Academy and the Hmong community for being my inspiration for this dissertation. I would like to thank Dr. Tony Vang and Hmong International New Year for donating a booth for me to conduct my research during the Fresno Hmong New Year in December 2015. A great big thank you to all my research assistants and participants. My research would not have been possible without your help and support. Last, but not least, thank you to Father Yves Bertrais, William Smalley, and Linwood Barney for creating the Hmong RPA writing system. On behalf of all the Hmong people who are using the Hmong RPA, we are forever indebted to the three of you and will take the necessary efforts to preserve our Hmong language for future generations.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

| LIST OF TABLES | xi |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xiii |
| CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem | 1 |
| Purpose of the Study | 3 |
| Background | 4 |
| Context of the Study | 6 |
| Significance of the Study | 7 |
| Theoretical Framework | 10 |
| Method | 11 |
| Training of Research Assistants | 13 |
| Research Questions | 13 |
| Summary | 14 |
| CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE | 16 |
| Overview of Hmong History | 16 |
| Origin of the Hmong | 18 |
| Hmong in China | 21 |
| The Hmong Kingdom | 22 |
| Hmong in Southeast Asia | 26 |
| Hmong in Vietnam | 27 |
| Hmong in Burma | 27 |
| Hmong in Laos | 28 |
Hmong in Thailand ................................................................. 30
Resettlement in Third Countries ........................................... 32
Hmong Oral Cultural Tradition .............................................. 34
The History of the Written Scripts ......................................... 35
Writing Systems ....................................................................... 36
  Mother of Writing .................................................................. 38
  Romanized Popular Alphabet ............................................... 38
History of Education in the Hmong Culture ............................ 40
Language Dialects .................................................................... 42
Language .................................................................................. 46
  Language Contact .................................................................. 47
  Language Endangerment ....................................................... 50
  Language Shift ...................................................................... 54
  Language Maintenance .......................................................... 56
Summary .................................................................................. 60

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY .................................................. 62
Purpose of Study ...................................................................... 62
Research Design ...................................................................... 62
Research Questions ................................................................... 63
Participants/Sample ............................................................... 64
Instrumentation ...................................................................... 67
Quantitative: The Perceptions on Hmong Language and Cultural Values
  Survey .................................................................................. 67
Qualitative: Language and Cultural Maintenance Protocol ........ 68
  Language Maintenance Protocol .......................................... 68
Cultural Maintenance Protocol ........................................................................... 69
Pilot .................................................................................................................. 70
Training of Research Assistants ...................................................................... 71
Data Collection .................................................................................................. 71
Language and Cultural Maintenance Protocol ................................................. 72
  Interview Participants Description ................................................................. 72
Data Analysis ..................................................................................................... 76
  Quantitative Analysis .................................................................................... 76
  Qualitative Analysis ..................................................................................... 77
Researcher’s Background and Biases ................................................................. 78
Limitations ......................................................................................................... 79
Summary ............................................................................................................ 80

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS/OUTCOMES .................................................................... 81
Research Questions ............................................................................................. 81
Quantitative Results ........................................................................................... 82
  Survey Participants Description .................................................................... 82
  Language Results .......................................................................................... 89
Research Question Test of Significance ............................................................ 95
  Cultural Results ............................................................................................ 101
Qualitative Results ............................................................................................ 102
  Theme 1: Cultural Pride ............................................................................... 102
  Theme 2: Language Maintenance and Language Loss ................................. 108
  Theme 3: Generational Differences ............................................................. 124
Summary ............................................................................................................ 133

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION/SUMMARY/CONCLUSION ...................................... 135
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1</td>
<td>Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2</td>
<td>Face-to-Face Interview Participants</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by Day of Data Collection</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Gender and Marital Status</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 5</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Participants with Children and Number of Children</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 6</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Religions Practiced by Participants</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 7</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by State and Country of Residence</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 8</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Participants by Country of Birth</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 9</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by Year of Arrival</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 10</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Attending School in the U.S. and the Grade First Enrolled in a U.S. School</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 11</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Highest Level of Education Completed</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 12</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Mothers’ and Fathers’ First Language and Highest Level of Education Completed.</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 13</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of the Hmong Writing Systems Used by Participants</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 14</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of the Language Most Often Used by Participants</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 15</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Speaking, Reading, and Writing Abilities</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 16</td>
<td>Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Self-Ratings of Their Abilities and the Importance of Each Skill Set</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Perceptions of the Importance and Encouragement for Their Children to Speak, Read, and Write in Hmong

Table 18. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Language Use When Speaking to Their Children and Children’s Language When Speaking to Parents

Table 19. Frequencies and Percentages of How Participants Learned To Read and Write

Table 20. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Hmong TV Viewing and Radio Listening Patterns

Table 21. Chi-Square for Importance of Speaking To Speaking Well

Table 22. Chi-Square for Importance of Reading to Reading Well

Table 23. Chi-Square for Importance of Writing to Writing Well

Table 24. Chi-Square for Participants’ Hmong Speaking Ability to Importance of Participants’ Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

Table 25. Chi-Square of Participants’ Hmong Reading Ability to Importance of Participants’ Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

Table 26. Chi-Square of Participants’ Hmong Writing Ability to Importance of Participants’ Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

Table 27. Chi-Square of Participants’ Encouragement of Children to Speak Hmong to Importance of Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

Table 28. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Hmong Identity Perception

Table 29. Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Marriage Preferences for Their Children
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Hmong language family diagram</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Use of final consonant as tone marker</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Hmong people are one of the newest refugees in America. They started coming to America in the mid-1970s as a result of their involvement with the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) during the Vietnam War. Most of the Hmong elders have had a hard time adjusting to American life; however, the children may have already adjusted to life in America and no longer see or appreciate the struggles their family members went through for these children to be where they are. Thus, their assimilation into the mainstream culture may come at a great cost to their language and culture. The present study examined the Hmong people’s current perceptions about their writing system, their spoken language, and their traditional values after almost 40 years in America. The purpose of this study was to investigate the current state of Hmong language usage (both oral and written) among the Hmong people, how cultural values are being maintained in the Hmong community across the United States, and how language and culture are being passed on to Hmong children.

Statement of the Problem

According to the 2010 U.S. Census as reported by Pfeifer et al. (2013), there were 256,430 Hmong people living in the United States (U.S.). Of these, 107,094 people were born outside of the U.S., and only 17,950 were ages 62 or older. This translates into having very few Hmong elders left who know the oral history, written language, and cultural values of the Hmong people. The language into which an individual is born is an important tool for communicating and for passing down history, cultural traditions, values, and beliefs from one generation to the next; moreover, this language must be maintained to learn one’s culture and establish a healthy identity. The ability to maintain one’s language is key to
sustaining a culture in the presence of a dominant language (Keiser, 2003, pp. 3-4).

Research showed that on average, one language was lost every 2 weeks (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006), and that by the end of the 21st century, there would be only about 100 languages left in the world (Language, 1999). Fishman et al. (1966) indicated that on-going efforts to maintain minority languages and cultures began early on when different immigrant groups first arrived on the shores of America or at their country of destination. Fishman et al. (1966) stated:

For all these reasons — reasons of habit and of conviction and of wisdom — the songs and the stories, the customs and the celebrations, the religious beliefs and the literary treasures, the foods, the values, and the memories of the “old country” were not and could not be scrapped. There is no way of adjusting to the new but through the old. Thus the languages and traditions of immigrants—colonial and post-colonial—were established on American soil both because they were valued in and of themselves, and because they provided sympathetic companions for the journey of adaptation to America. (p. 26)

Fishman’s above statement described the language and cultural components that bound immigrant cultures together. Language and culture are important traditional values that help people to adapt to life in America. In the Hmong culture at the time of this writing, some of the traditional values that are taught to children from one generation to the next are as follows: respect parents and elders; live simply and work hard to support the natural, family system; and live in the same household as your parents or parents-in-law and grandparents. The Hmong culture also strongly values love, kindness, empathy, humility, selflessness, self-control, telling the truth, forgiveness, and being collective and not individualistic in nature.

The Hmong people have had an oral culture for thousands of years, beginning when they lived in China. This oral tradition was their way of passing
down cultural values, rituals, songs, history, and legends. It was not until 1953, with the creation of the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), that the Hmong had a written system of writing (Smalley, Vang, & Yang, 1990, p. 150). This writing system provided the Hmong people with the door for a journey to literacy and written communication. However, in the roughly 60 years since the Hmong RPA was created, many Hmong children in the United States could not speak, read, or write in their primary language. It may then be assumed that similar situations of language contact, endangerment, and language shift are occurring for the Hmong people all over the world, whether they are in Canada, Australia, France, Thailand, Laos, or China. This may mean that, in time, Hmong children will forget their Hmong heritage and will lose both their language and culture altogether. Cha (2010) asserted:

Like all cultures, language is the bond that holds Hmong culture together. Our language is ancient, and literacy is barely emerging. As residents in societies where we must master the dominant language to survive, Hmong language languishes. If we do not maintain our language, it will not be possible to retain our culture. (p. 5)

The question arises: what are the Hmong community, parents, and community-based organizations around the U.S. doing to maintain the Hmong written and oral language and cultural values for the future generations of Hmong children so that their Hmong identity will not be forgotten, and their language will not disappear?

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current level of Hmong participants’ speaking, reading, and writing ability as well as their perceptions of cultural values and how these factors pertain to language and cultural maintenance in the U.S. The Hmong people were one of the newest groups of refugees to come
to America in the last 40 years. According to data from the Census 2010 (Pfeifer et al., 2013), there were over 256,430 Hmong people residing in the U.S.; however, there were only about 17,950 Hmong elders who were 62 years of age and older. This means that there are very few guardians of the Hmong language, culture, and history left. This study examined the match between Hmong language skills and values, hopes, and awareness within the Hmong community that some concerted efforts must take place in order to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations.

**Background**

Before the Hmong people came as war refugees to the U.S., Canada, Argentina, France, Germany, and Australia, they lived in the mountaintops of Laos, Thailand, Burma, and Vietnam for over 100 years (Cooper, 1998; Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Mottin, 1980; Tapp, 1986; Vang 2008; Yang, 1992, 1993). Prior to their diaspora southward from China to Southeast Asia, the Hmong people, who were also known as the Miao, were the aboriginal tribes of the Yellow River basin (Quincy, 1995). The Hmong were a migratory group of people who liked to live independently and peacefully in a clan system (Vang, 2008). While in China, the Hmong were believed to have been ruled by a Hmong king named Sonom; however, research disputed this position. Legends, folksongs, and folktales contended that the Hmong once had a powerful, legendary king named Chiyou (*Txiv Yawg*, in Hmong RPA spelling).

Once in the mountains of Southeast Asia, the Hmong people continued with their slash-and-burn system of farming; raised chickens, pigs, and oxen; and lived simple, sufficient, and peaceful lifestyles (Tapp, 1986, 1989). In the 1950s, Laos was colonized by the French people and was taxed heavily until the uprising by Pa Chay Vu, which was known also as the “Madman’s War” (Mottin, 1980; Quincy,
The Hmong were later recruited by the American CIA to help carry out a covert operation in Laos, known as the Secret War, to help stall the Viet Cong’s missions in South Vietnam. The Secret War took the lives of many Hmong men, boys, and civilians in the 10 years in which it took place. During this time, the Hmong men and teenagers were at the frontline of the war, rescuing downed, American pilots and trying to stop the spread of communism to Laos (Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Mottin, 1980; Vang, 2008).

In 1973, when the new Pathet Lao regime took over as the People’s Democratic Republic of Laos, the American CIA left to go back to America, and the Hmong people had to fend for themselves. Those who stayed back in Laos, were in danger of being persecuted. Hmongs who crossed the Mekong River to Thailand in hopes of reaching refugee camps risked stepping on land mines or being killed by the Pathet Lao soldiers (Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Hamilton-Merritt, 1999; Mottin, 1980; Vang, 2008).

Ten years prior to the Secret War in Laos, the Hmong were given a writing system which was one of the highlights of their life before the war. The Hmong RPA is a writing system that was created in 1953 by Father Yves Bertrais, Pastor Linwood Barney, and Dr. William A. Smalley. It is now widely used by the Hmong community across the U.S. and in other countries. However, before this time, the Hmong people were an oral culture (Thao, 2006). Everything that they knew was passed on from generation to generation through poems, songs, ritual rites, and through storytelling (Thao, 2006). Today, the Hmong RPA is used to record Hmong stories, poems, folk songs, chants, and rituals. Hmong history and cultural books may be found in libraries, and Hmong literacy is being taught in high schools and in some colleges and universities in the U.S. and in other parts of the world. However, the future of the Hmong language and culture is quite dim.
The Hmong RPA writing system has only been in use for a little over 60 years, and the Hmong people have only been in the U.S. since the mid-1970s, yet many Hmong children cannot speak the language, and the majority of them do not read or write in the Hmong language.

In addition to language, the Hmong people share other practices that help form cultural identity. Hmong practice ancestral worship, animism, and/or shamanism. Some Hmong have converted to Christianity; however, Hmongs share common cultural values regardless of their religion. The Hmong people have always taught their children to respect their elders, to have humility and self-control, exercise forgiveness, to always tell the truth, to not cheat and steal, and to value marriage, clan relationships, and extended family systems. However, these are cultural values that are difficult to maintain in American society because of the individualistic nature of the American culture.

**Context of the Study**

The Hmong people had to endure many hardships in their 4000-year-old history from China to America in order to keep their language and culture intact (Quincy, 1995; Vang, 2008; Yang, 1993). According to Chinese mythology and history, the Hmong can be traced back 4,600 years. It was not until the early 1900s that different scripts were discovered and not until 1953 that the RPA system was invented. A large number of the Hmong people do not read and write in their native language. Since their arrival in the U.S., Hmongs had to be immersed in the English language and in the American culture which limit their ability to learn the Hmong language and culture. Most Hmong students today are not literate in the Hmong writing system.

Although the older population may not be literate in English, they are the only ones who are fluent in Hmong. Many young, adult Hmong can only speak
broken Hmong, and some teenagers and younger children may have stopped using
Hmong in their daily conversations with their parents, relatives, and peers
altogether. Language loss in the Hmong communities is an issue that needs to be
addressed now so that future generations of Hmong will not be deprived of their
mother tongue, the written language, and cultural values associated with their
language and history.

The Hmong written language is an important aspect of maintaining Hmong
culture. Since it was not very long ago that the Hmong RPA was invented, many
Hmong parents do not read and write in their native language. This makes it
difficult for them to teach it to their children. With their new life in the U.S.,
going to American schools means Hmong students must learn the English
language. It is a matter of survival and of fitting in. This leaves very little
opportunity, if any at all, for Hmong students to learn their native language. As a
result of this, the current reality is that many Hmong students do not and cannot
speak, read, and write in the Hmong language.

The present study surveyed Hmong adults, 18 years of age or older, to
determine the following: language skill-level of the Hmong community; how the
Hmong felt about their written language and spoken language; and the
maintenance of traditional or cultural values. Furthermore, this study examined
what the community-based organizations, families, and clan leaders were doing to
pass on the Hmong oral and written language and cultural values to Hmong
students.

Significance of the Study

The association of language and culture loss has been documented in the
U.S. by Fishman et al. (1966) since the beginning of many immigrants’ diaspora
into the new world. Lilly Fillmore (1991) wrote this about language and culture loss:

The phenomenon is a familiar one in the United States. It is the story of countless American immigrants and native children and adults who have lost their ethnic languages in the process of becoming linguistically assimilated into the English-speaking world of the school and society. (p. 324)

Thus, it is not just the job of linguists to keep languages alive and thriving. Every citizen should be alarmed about the rate at which languages are disappearing. Nettle and Romaine (2000) asserted, “language is what has made everything possible for us as a species: our cultures, our technology, our art, music, and much more. In our languages, lies a rich source of the accumulated wisdom of all humans.” (p. 14)

Living in the monolingual society of the U.S., many parents and children have to decide between their primary language and the dominant language. Often, the dominant language is the winner since it is the key to self-sufficiency and social interaction in the new country. It is unfortunate that many immigrants who came before the Hmong people had to lose their language and culture in order to advance in American society. With their experiences and the advocacy work that they have begun, the Hmong community should take into consideration the work that needs to be done to lead their children into the world of the mainstream society with two languages and their Hmong culture intact. During his 1995 symposium speech, Dr. Smalley asserted the following (as cited in Vang, 2008):

We [Dr. Smalley, Rev. Barney, and Father Bertrais] believe that people need the ability to read and write in their first language, no matter how many other languages they know. They need to read and write in the language of the heart, the language of the home, not just the language of the school. They need reading and writing skills in the language of the emotions, the language in which they dream, and think. Ability to read and write in a foreign language is fine, but it is not enough. (p. 189)
As Hmong families have continued to relocate to the U.S. since the Vietnam War, they have encountered many problems. Hmong families have to make a living and support their families in this new land of opportunity. In hopes of achieving the “American Dream,” many parents work endless hours, leaving at home their young children with grandparents. Hmong students do not have many opportunities to learn their language or culture due to the lack of interaction between parents and children. In addition, parents place high expectations on their children to learn the English language as quickly as possible so that they will not be left behind in their education, for parents place a high priority on education. Due to these factors, and in a mere 40 years since the Hmong became war refugees to the U.S., many Hmong students currently do not speak, read, or write the Hmong language. Presently, there is little existing research pertaining to Hmong language loss and maintenance; however, there is extensive research about language loss and maintenance in general (Tannenbaum & Berkovich, 2005, p. 291).

This language loss has great significance to the Hmong communities across America and in other countries where Hmong people are currently residing. The Hmong communities need to be aware of the rate at which the loss of the Hmong language is being experienced by their young children. Research showed that students who were literate in their first language and had a strong sense of who they were, did better in school (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004, p. 2). For this reason, it is not only the right thing to do, but it is also the right time to ensure that Hmong students learn and maintain their mother tongue.

According to Jacques Lemoine (as cited in Xiong, 2011), the loss of the Hmong language among future generations could be the loss of an oral tradition, and this loss could result in the “loss of Hmong’s express, functional rituals of life
and death” (p. 2). The Hmong people were an oral culture until 1953 when the Hmong RPA was created, and with the loss of the Hmong language skills, the oral history and social life could be lost forever.

**Theoretical Framework**

Schmid (2002) stated, the inauguration of language attrition studies is commonly assumed to have taken place in 1980 with the UPenn conference ‘The Loss of Language Skills’ (p. 9). These studies focused on intralinguistic situations and phenomena of interlanguage. Identity theories as a framework on language loss also gained momentum in the field of research. Within the framework of ethnic identity, the role of language has only been a research topic in recent years. Edwards (1992) stated that “[i]dentity is very closely related to identification, i.e. group membership, and human beings tend to act in a way which is considered accepted behavior for the group they want to belong to” (p. 3).

Furthermore, John Wendell and Patrick Heinrich (2012) shared information about the use of language ecologies in the 1990s as a framework for language diversity loss. They contended that “language diversity is diminished because modernism introduces the novel idea of equality through national unity and seeks to attain it through uniformity, that is, aligning everyone to the dominating language, culture, history and more” (p. 157).

Joshua Fishman (2001) developed a scale to measure language loss that has eight stages. This scale is known as the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale or GIDS. He posited that the further away from stage one on the continuum of the eight stages, the greater the disruption or threat of it from being passed down from one generation to the next. Furthermore, he stressed the crucial step in reversing language loss, which he called Stage 6. This stage involves transmitting the
heritage language from adult to child within the home, neighborhood, and community as the key to reversing language loss.

Two theoretical frameworks were used to guide this study: the Acts of Identity framework by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller and the sociopolitical framework. Schmid (2002) stated,

Group membership is determined by an interaction of complex characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, many of which (e.g. age, sex, ethnicity) are outside the individual’s control. Within this framework, linguistic behavior is one of the more prominent and more immediately noticeable aspects among those the individual does have the power to change. (p. 27)

With this sociopolitical framework, the researcher looked at the sociopolitical factors and language use patterns (Opengin, 2012) that had hindered the passing on of the native language, in this case, the Hmong language. Some of those factors may have been societal or from schooling.

Method

This research was designed as a mixed-method study. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) there are six advantages for using mixed methods:

1) Mixed-methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research.

2) Mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone.

3) Mixed methods research helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone.

4) Mixed methods provide a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers.
5) Mixed methods research encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others for qualitative research.

6) Mixed methods research is practical in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem.

The researcher used an explanatory, sequential, mixed-method design to examine the current state of Hmong reading, speaking, and writing ability as well as cultural values and how these related to language loss and maintenance in different parts of the U.S.

Two instruments were used in this study: the Perceptions on Hmong Language and Cultural Values Survey which was administered during the Hmong New Year, and the Language and Cultural Maintenance-interview protocol which was administered on a one-to-one basis. Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010) noted that questionnaires usually measure many variables. In addition, an interview usually “involves the collection of data through direct interaction between the researcher and the individuals being studied” (Gall et al., 2010, p. 134).

Prior to the Hmong New Year, the researcher went on Hmong Radio and Hmong TV to publicize the intent of the study and where it was to take place. The researcher also outlined the benefits of the research to the Hmong community and shared the benefits of participants’ involvement in the research. The researcher and all research assistants wore T-shirts to identify themselves as researchers from California State University, Fresno (Fresno State). Fliers were handed out at the three entrances to the Hmong New Year event along with one raffle ticket per flier. The researcher and research assistants provided directions to where the research booth was located. In addition, all participants were provided with an incentive for participating in the research. The initial incentive was a globe stress-
ball which participants could use for de-stressing and for playing the Hmong New Year game of ball tossing. Each participant who turned in the raffle ticket was entered into a drawing for $100 on the last day of the Hmong New Year. Face-to-face interviewees were each given a $20 gift card to Target in appreciation for their time contributing to the research.

**Training of Research Assistants**

During the first weekend of December 2014, the researcher conducted training for all the research assistants who helped with the data collection. The researcher performed role-playing techniques on how to approach participants, how to ask participants for their consent to participate in the research, and how to ask the questions from the survey. In addition, research assistants learned how to record participant reactions as well as their own reactions while collecting data. They were told to notate whether or not the participants or they themselves felt rushed or unfocused. They were told to record the number of participants that were approached but did not want to participate. The researcher also trained research assistants about language rating and how to rate if someone read, spoke, or wrote at the intermediate, early-advanced, or advanced level.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question was: “What are the current skills and perceptions of Hmong speaking, reading, writing among the Hmong people, what are their perceptions of their cultural values, and how does this information pertain to language and cultural maintenance?” Specific research questions were:

1) What is the present level of Hmong speaking, reading, and writing ability and cultural values, and how does this information relate to other demographic information?
2) What are the Hmong community, families, and organizations in the U.S. currently doing to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations of Hmong?

This study was undertaken so that Hmong identity would not be forgotten and that Hmong language would thrive in the future.

Summary

According to the U.S. Census report in 2010, there were close to 260,000 Hmong people living in the United States. However, there were only about 17,000 Hmong elders who were aged 62 or older (Pfeifer et al., 2013). Vang and Lewis (1984) shared that “as the old people die, the knowledge of the Hmong also dies” (p. 7). With this information and the data from the 2010 census, it is urgent that the Hmong community work to leverage efforts to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations of the Hmong people before all the elders are deceased. Nettle and Romaine (2000) reiterated the importance of language by saying that language is what has made everything in our life possible.

Language maintenance and language loss is not a new phenomenon, and there is abundant documentation on the subject (Fishman et al., 1966). It has also been found that one language is lost every 2 weeks (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). In addition, the fact that a student who is literate in his or her native language will excel in learning a second language speaks volume about the importance of maintaining and passing on the native language to students from various ethnicities, and in this particular case, the Hmong students.

The case-study design used for this study was an explanatory, sequential, mixed-method. Hmong people aged 18-70 were surveyed about their perceptions and reading, speaking, and writing abilities in the Hmong language to examine the relationship between the literacy rate and the maintenance of Hmong cultural or
traditional values. Face-to-face interviews were also conducted for the qualitative part of this research to explore strategies or ways of maintaining and passing on the written and oral language and cultural and traditional values to younger Hmong youths.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review relates the history of the Hmong people and their oral and written language and cultural values and beliefs. What follows is a review of research related to language contact, language loss, and language maintenance. A few cases of language revitalization efforts are discussed along with a tool that was developed by Fishman (2001) known as the Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) which may assist in pinpointing the timeframe when a language can or cannot be saved.

Overview of Hmong History

Hmong history is a tragic story of oppression, suffering, and neglect. The Hmong have a rich heritage, reaching back over 5000 years, but little is recorded about either their ancient or modern history. In 2008, the Hmong worldwide population was currently estimated at 4.6 million, including 3.1 million in China and 1.5 million in Southeast Asia and the West (Vang, 2008). The worldwide population of the Hmong and Miao was estimated at 10.7 million. Since the Vietnam War, almost 100,000 Hmong refugees have migrated from Laos to live in North America and Europe (Vang, 2008).

The Hmong people were thought to have originated from Mongolia. Known in earlier literatures as the Miao or Meo, they have often been subjugated, and they have moved many times (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990). The Hmong are now spread all over China, Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, and Laos. Since 1975, the U.S., Argentina, Europe, Canada, Australia and French Guiana have become homes for the Hmong people of Laos (Cooper, Tapp, Lee, & Schwoer-Kohl, 1991). Trying to find an accurate count of the Hmong people is difficult to impossible. Lemoine (2005) shared that in 1995, the official number of Hmong in
Laos was only about 320,000, and in Vietnam in 1999, the number of Hmong people was 787,600. Some 118,000 to 150,000 Hmong resided in Thailand, and the total number of Hmong for the Indo-Chinese Peninsula was 1,257,600. In 2000, there were about 2,777,039 true Hmong-speakers in China. Lemoine then concluded that, altogether, there were approximately 4,034,639 in Asia. Given all the data available in 2000 on Hmong-speaking people in the world, Lemoine approximated that the population was around 4.5 to 5 million Hmong people worldwide.

The Hmong people practiced an oral culture, and all the cultural knowledge currently held was passed down from one generation to the next through oral storytelling, rituals, poems, and songs (Cooper, 1998, p. 13; Duffy, 2007, p. 21; Thao, 2006, p. 11). Because the Hmong did not have written language until the 1950s, no tradition of a written history existed in the Hmong culture until that time. Therefore, current knowledge of Hmong history was orally transmitted through myths and legends over many centuries. What has been pieced together and constructed into the Hmong people’s history from these myths and legends has only been done by people who were not of Hmong ancestry. Cooper (1998) speculated that written, Hmong history was based mostly upon what was suspected: “Most reports and writing on the Hmong, until recent years, have been made by soldiers, administrators and missionaries. The writers were often intent on killing, taxing, or converting the Hmong, activities which tend to make partial history” (p. 13).

It is obvious that the Hmong history told by foreigners only tells about the Hmong’s relations with their non-Hmong neighbors during times of uprising and revolts, but it contains nothing about the times the Hmong lived in peace and in complete harmony with their surrounding neighbors. Much of what has been
written about the Hmong puts great emphasis on war and violence which gives the impression of the Hmong personality as warrior-like and rebellious (Cooper, 1998, p. 14). Trueba et al., (1990) contended, “oral traditions and recorded personal histories depict the Hmong as fierce, independent and invincible people who took to the mountains rather than submit to the domination of lowlanders” (p. 21).

However, Quincy (1995) wrote, “despite the ill-deserved reputation for bellicosity, the Chinese have given the Hmong, they were then, as they are now, a peace-loving people, slow to anger and even slower to fight unless forced to do so out of desperation” (p. 47). The Hmong people of Laos, if left untouched by the American CIA and the Secret War, would have lived peacefully in their villages as tolerant, reasonable, and loyal people (Cooper, 1998, p. 14).

It is only recently that Hmong scholars such as Dr. Yang Dao, Dr. Kou Yang, Dr. Gary Yia Lee, Dr. Thomas S. Vang and others have been tracing Hmong roots and trying to provide the Hmong people with a coherent history (Yang, 2003). It was noted by Yang, (2003), that the Hmong people and their history have not yet been studied fully; therefore, there are many different versions of the history of the Hmong.

**Origin of the Hmong**

The place of origin for the Hmong people remains a mystery to this day. Based upon Hmong oral myths and legends and according to Thao (1999), there were four theories of Hmong origin that emerged. The first one was the theory of Mesopotamian Origin which was forwarded by F. M. Savina who was a Catholic priest from France. The Theory of Ultimate Southern Origin was the second theory started by a researcher known as Eickstedt. The third origin theory was the Theory of China Origin, and the last theory was the Theory of Russian Origin (Thao, 1999).
Father F. M. Savina was sent by the Society for Foreign Missions of Paris, France to China to spread the word of God to the Hmong (Quincy, 1995). Father Savina was a scholar as well as a priest, and he mastered the Hmong language. He studied the Hmong people’s religion and customs. Savina learned that the Hmong people orally handed down their legends and cultural practices, essentially unchanged, from one generation to the next. Father Savina recorded Hmong legends to help him with the creation of a written language as an avenue for passing on the Christian religion to the Hmong. He developed the Romanized script for the Hmong in China. From the legends that the Hmong people told Father Savina, he theorized that the Hmong people may have originated from Mesopotamia and that their ancestors were the Turanians (Mottin, 1980; Quincy, 1995).

The Turanians were a Caucasoid group who lived in the Iranian Plateau. After invading Iran, they lived between the Euphrates River and the Tigris River in what is known as Chaldea. The legends of the flood and the Tower of Babel were born out of this area. This account says that the Hmong were from Europe because of the genetic trait of having blonde hair and blue eyes and with recent studies classifying Hmong as the “most Caucasian population of Southeast Asia” (Quincy, 1995, p. 18). Savina believed that, due to their European physical traits and their language and legends, the Hmong’s original homeland must have been outside of China. Furthermore, he explained that the Hmong people were driven out of the area and into Siberia by the Aryan invaders before migrating down to China.

The second theory of Hmong origin was developed by Eickstedt (as cited in Thao, 1999). Eickstedt believed that the Hmong came from India and Myanmar. His claim was also supported by Father LaRocca. During 1996, Father LaRocca
conducted a month-long expedition to validate the original homeland of the Hmong in China. He believed that the Hmong people came from a place referred to as Li Hu Yen Chi Guen, which is south of Tibet near the border of Burma (Thao, 1999).

The third theory offered by Larteguy (as cited in Thao, 1999) was the Theory of Russian Origin. Larteguy did research on the Hmong people in the 1950s. He declared that the Hmong were living in the Siberian plain around Lake Baikal which is an area located in Russia just north of Mongolia. Larteguy believed that the Hmong migrated down to China from Russia (as cited in Thao, 1999).

The fourth theory of origin has the Hmong originating from China (Thao, 1999). According to Mottin, Bernatzik, Graham, Linh Yeuh-Wah and Geddes (as cited in Thao, 2006), the Hmong had always lived in southern China on the basin of the Yellow River, and it was noted that the Hmong already occupied this area at about the 27th century B.C. Vang (2008) asserted, “even today, Chinese history still records ancestors of the Hmong and Miao as the natives of China: The Miao-tze, found in southwestern China, are said to be the descendants of the aborigines” (p. 31).

The Hmong were also thought to have come from Mongolia, Tibet, or Lappland given the descriptions of the land of snow and ice and days and nights lasting half a year-long (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). There is not just one legend, folktale, or theory as to the origin of the Hmong people, but many. What has been passed down from one generation to the next has all been through word of mouth and through poems, songs, stories, and cultural rituals.

The last homeland of the Hmong people before their migration south was indeed China. For thousands of years, the Hmong people have been a migratory
people and have roamed from place to place in search of a better life where they could live freely and peacefully. As noted by Tapp (1986), the Hmong were not fighting for independence to be their own country. They only wanted to be left alone to cultivate the lands on which they lived and to be able to retain their own customs and traditions in peace. Given their long history of subjugation, Tapp (1986) acknowledges that the Hmong have managed to maintain their tradition and cultures:

Despite their long history of persecution and engagement in military conflict, it is remarkable to what extent the Hmong have in their villages managed to maintain their traditional ideas of loyalty, respect for age, courtesy, honesty and peaceable co-existence with their neighbors. (p. 11)

**Hmong in China**

It is certain that the last known place that the Hmong ancestors inhabited prior to their migration southward to Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and Laos was China. Today, the descendants of the Hmong from China have resettled in the U.S., Canada, Australia, French Guiana, France, Germany, and Argentina. The Hmong ethnic group was an aboriginal tribe of the Southern mountains of China (Ovesen, 1995; Tapp, 1989). According to Yang (2003), Hmong scholars in China proposed that the Hmong lived along the Yellow River in Central China around 3000 B.C. Mottin (1980) asserted that, according to documentation found in Chinese literature about the presence of Miao in their land, the Miao were in China before the Han Chinese.

Tapp (1986) estimated that there were about 6 million Hmong who lived in the rugged mountains of southwestern China and the northern parts of Laos, Vietnam, and Thailand. These mountain dwellers came from a race that had competed for supremacy over the banks of the lower Yangtze River. Cooper
(1998) contended that these bits and pieces of biased information could trace the Hmong back 4000 years in China.

According to documentation in Chinese history books, and according to testimonies that were made by Hmong elders who made it to the U.S., Hmong ancestors migrated south from China from the Yellow River Valley (Yang, 1992; Quincy, 1995). Hmong elders have the following saying, “Tsis pom dej dag ces siab yeej tsis nqig.” Translated into English, this means, “One should not be satisfied until one has reached the Yellow River” (personal communication, Wa Tou Xiong, July 13, 2014). This migration was estimated to have occurred between 4000-5000 years ago when the Hmong people were known to have lived in China (Bliatout, Downing, Lewis & Yang, 1988). It was noted that the Hmong people were in China as early as 2679 B.C. (Cooper, 1998) and that “their diaspora south started as long ago as 3000 B.C.” (Faderman & Xiong, 1998).

Quincy (1995) and Yang (1992) commented that Chinese historians described the Hmong as having inhabited the Yellow River basin prior to the Chinese occupation of the land. According to Yang (1992), the Hmong were one of the “descendants of the San Miao or ‘three Miao’ who were believed to be the first settlers of the Yellow River basin in China” (p. 258).

The Hmong Kingdom

According to Quincy (1995), a Hmong kingdom existed around 400-900 A.D., most likely at the beginning of the fifth century. A Hmong king was chosen by vote “by all men capable of bearing arms” from either the sons of the monarch or from a few candidates from within the Hmong kingdom (Quincy, 1995, p. 44). This kingdom functioned like a federated state where 20 villages became a district, and each district was appointed a village headman. The Hmong kingdom held popular assemblies at the village and district levels as a way to have governing
checks and balances. Whatever the issues may have been, a majority vote decided the issue. The king decided on issues that were for the good of the kingdom while other issues rested within each district. The Hmong kingdom was the strongest toward the end of the sixth century. The Hmong were appointed prestigious positions in the courts of the different Chinese dynasties, and they were sought after as military allies (Quincy, 1995).

This throne, however, was lost to Li Yuan and became the T’ang dynasty in 618. Li Yuan tried to take back all the land that was in the hands of the Hmong. Once under this dynasty, the Hmong were still able to decide on local matters, but taxes were paid to the empire. In 907 A.D., the Hmong kingdom was annihilated by a Chinese adventurer named Ma Yin. The Hmong king and all the generals perished in the fighting that took place at that time (Quincy, 1995).

According to Entenmann’s (2005) research, the so-called Hmong kingdom and King Sonom described in the above-mentioned works of Quincy (1995) and Faderman and Xiong (1998) were determined not to have been a Hmong kingdom and king at all, and the people ruled by this king were not of Hmong ancestry. Entenmann argued that King Sonom was a Jinchuan leader. Today, there are about 100,000 Jinchuan people in existence. The Jinchuan people are also known by their Tibetan name, the Gyarong. According to Entenmann the legendary King Sonom was a Tibetan rather than a Miao or Hmong, and his descendants live in modern Mentoucun village. Entenmann wanted to correct mistakes that had been made by previous researchers in the field and hoped to clarify the actual, historical identity of Sonom.

According to Hmong elders, there was indeed a Hmong ruler (W.T. Xiong, personal communication, September 2, 2014). Vang (2008) mentioned a federation of clans and a state under a ruler named Jiang Yang. In Hmong, his
name is Chiyou or Chih Yu (spelled Txiv Yawg in the Hmong RPA). Hmong elders further contend that the Hmong or Miao occupied the upper plains of the Yellow River. They were the Jui Li (nine clans) people, and “they established villages and erected fortified towns in the valleys and plains, living as sedentary farmers growing crops, chiefly sorghum, beans, millet, and raising animals” (Vang, 2008, p. 31). The Jui Li people became a strong state with judicial, social, and religious codes of conduct, and these people united against the neighboring Han Chinese under Txiv Yawg. After Txiv Yawg was constantly pursued in battles, he eventually lost to the Han Chinese. The Jui Li people then had to move out of their land. Due to their loss in population, the Jui Li people became the Three Miao Groups or San-Miao state. Furthermore, they were subjugated and divided into still smaller tribes and clans. Today, Txiv Yawg is still being honored by the Hmong and Miao as their first, national hero (Vang, 2008).

The Hmong never recovered from these wars and, in turn, never regained control of any land to call their own. As it was in the beginning of their earliest history, the Hmong were reduced to “loose federation of tribes” (Quincy, 1995, p. 50). Although they were thought to have grown into a strong state, due to ongoing wars, they dwindled down to being a tribal people, only connected together by a common language and customs and geographically separated into numerous groups.

Despite the checkered history of the Hmong, clans have remained an important part of their culture. According to Quincy (1995), after the Hmong were subjugated and powerless, the Chinese ordered the Hmong to wear clothes of different colors. Thus, the terms Black Hmong, White Hmong, Flowery Hmong, Red Hmong, and Blue Hmong indicated the cloth colors these people were mandated to wear. The Chinese attempted several methods to separate and
minimize the Hmong, but these ways were rather useless because clans remained
important to the Hmong. Quincy noted that from the tenth century on, clan
affiliation grew in importance, creating mutual rights and obligations enjoyed or
owed to members of the same clan. Although this system created some divisions,
it did not prevent clans from joining forces to combat a common enemy to
decrease the rate at which they rebelled against other groups. A clan is defined as
follows:

The clan is considered the basic social and political unit in the Hmong
society. A clan consists of a male ancestor, his sons, unmarried daughters,
and the children of his sons going back 160 or more generations. Hmong
who share a common historical ancestor through a male bloodline, or who
are heir to and practice the same rituals as part of their patrimony, consider
themselves “of on root and trunk.” (Fresno Unified School District [FUSD],
2006, p. 28)

Cha, Vue, and Carmen (2004) describe a clan as “a group of families all of
whom share the same family name and all of whom are linked to a common set of
ancestors” (p. 15). Since the Hmong were known to be mountain dwellers and
were usually fewer in number than the majority groups, they needed to band
together for support. It is not known exactly when this practice started, but Cha et
al. commented that it must have started with the 12 original clans. Those clans
were designated by their last names: the Yang clan, Vang clan, Xiong clan, Thao
clan, Vue clan, Moua clan, Lee clan, Her clan, Hang clan, Lor clan, Cha or Chang
clan and the Kue clan. Currently in the U.S., there are a total of 18 clans (Cha et
al., 2004). Although Hmong clans bind all Hmong to past generations through
patrilineal descent, the origin of clan names is a mystery (Quincy, 1995); however,
there is an oral legend about how the clan names came about (Lee, 2007).

Trueba et al. (1990) affirms that the Hmong people have distinctive cultural
characteristics which they identify their social structure and intricate relationships.
The pattern of patrilineal clans where groups of males and their families share a common male relative and live with the husband’s family where they are obligated to take the roles and responsibilities of protecting the family unity along the patrilineal clans.

**Hmong in Southeast Asia**

According to archaeology and legend, the Hmong people and the Chinese were originally on good terms with one another. However, it is in the later part of their history together that they became each other’s biggest rivals (Quincy, 1995). As a result, the Hmong people migrated south from the Yellow River valley to escape Chinese brutality, persecution, heavy taxation, and unlivable conditions due to famine and warfare (Cooper, 1998; Duffy, 2007; Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Yang, 2003).

It is evident from the many accounts by Hmong elders to their children that the Hmong people of Laos did come from the mountainous, southern provinces of China (W.T. Xiong, personal communication, September 2, 2014). Furthermore, in 1810, a major massacre or subjugation led to the emigration of many Hmong who then settled in Vietnam, Thailand, and Southeast Burma (Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Trueba, et al., 1990). The bloodiest war between the Hmong and the Chinese occurred between 1855 and 1881 (Cooper, 1998). This probably caused the Hmong’s migration into northern Thailand around 1885. Within 50 years, the Hmong had spread across the entire mountain range from China across northern Vietnam and Laos. Yang (2003) stated that due to conflicts and outbreaks of war with the Chinese government, along with heavy taxation and maltreatment, thousands of the Hmong in China migrated down into Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, and Laos where they lived peacefully for 100 years.
Hmong in Vietnam

Mottin (1980) noted that the Hmong began migrating into Vietnam at the beginning of the 19th century (p. 42). According to Vang (2008), the Hmong in Vietnam lived in the northern, mountainous regions in Cao Bang, Dien Bien, Ha Gaing, Nghe An, Lao Cai, Lai Chau, Lang Son, Son La, Tuyen Quant, Thanh Hoa, and Yen Bai. Mottin asserted that between 1800 and 1860, many Hmong people came into the regions of Dong Van, Yen Minh, and Quan Ban and then went on to the West to Lao Cay, Chopa, Lai Chau, an Dien Bien Phu (Mottin, 1980).

During the Vietnam War, the Hmong of Vietnam fully supported the North Vietnamese government; however, they did not gain much status after the war. The highest level of leadership remained below the village level. As of this writing, the Hmong people of Vietnam were considered the poorest minority group there, and their living conditions had not improved since they came from China in the 19th century. Although they had been in Vietnam since leaving China in the early 19th century with “two high peaks in 1800 and 1860” (Mottin, 1980, p. 42), many were still not able to speak the Vietnamese language, only a few having received a college education and the majority remaining illiterate. The Hmong people of Vietnam continued to live in “extremely remote and inaccessible country area” (Vang, 2008, pp. 127-128). Lemoine (2005) estimated that there were approximately 787,600 Hmong living in Vietnam in 1999.

Hmong in Burma

During the late 18th century and early 19th century when the Hmong people started migrating down from China, some Hmong people settled in Southeast Burma (Faderman & Xiong, 1998; Tapp, 1989). In Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) there were an estimated 12,500 Hmong Njua or Green Hmong. About 2% were Christians, and the rest continued to practice their ethnic religion
of animism or shamanism (Joshua Project, 2014). Little literature has been found about this group of Hmong in Myanmar; therefore, this was all that was known about them at the time of this research.

**Hmong in Laos**

It was believed that between 1810 and 1820, the Hmong began arriving in Laos from China and settled on the peaceful slopes of the highest mountains (Mottin, 1980). For a while they were not in confrontation with any of the surrounding neighbors; however, as time went on, they came into conflict with the Khmu people over farming lands. A compromise was made, and the two groups continued to live as highland neighbors. They continued living as they had in the usual, social organization among extended families and large clans, owing great allegiance to one another (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). The Hmong people lived a peaceful life in Laos despite occasional uprisings and revolts to counter the prejudicial treatment from the majority population. They resumed their slash-and-burn, or swidden, agricultural way of life as they had done back in China, and they raised livestock such as chickens, pigs, goats, ducks, cattle, buffaloes, and horses for protein. The Hmong people in Laos were a self-sufficient group of people for over 150 years (FUSD, 2006).

Yang (1992) wrote that there was a confrontation between the Hmong people and the Franco-Lao authorities who established a heavy tax system and charged taxes according to heads in the village. The Hmong people refused to pay such a tax based on heads in the family, and they organized themselves to fight the soldiers who came to their village to enforce these laws. The Hmong people would not give up, and a compromise was made so the Hmong people could return to their way of life in the mountains (Yang, 1992).
In 1918, there was another revolt led by the Hmong people (Yang, 1992). It was known as the “Madman’s War” or “Rog Vwm/Rog Paj Cai.” Following this 3 year uprising, the French saw Hmong in a different light and the French government “granted special administrative status to both the Hmong in northern Laos and North Vietnam” (p. 266).

According to Yang (1992), after World War II, the Hmong had gained some respect from the French and Lao governments, and in March 1947, Toulia Lyfoung entered the Lao National Constitutional Assembly as a way to help establish the future status of the ethnic minorities in the new Laotian nation. Toulia Lyfoung’s entrance into the Lao governmental assembly provided minorities the opportunity to be recognized as legitimate people of Laos.

Between 1961 and 1973, the Hmong people were involved in a war that changed their lives forever (Yang, 1992). It was the Secret War which was financed by the U.S. CIA. It was estimated that over 15,000 Hmong soldiers lost their lives in this war, and one-third of the Hmong families were forced to leave their homes in search of safety (Yang, 1992). Mottin (1980) asserted that the Hmong paid a heavy fine for this war. About 40,000 Hmong men fought for General Vang Pao; 3,772 were killed, and 5,426 were injured between 1967 and 1971. Toward the end of the war, 70% of the Hmong recruits were boys between the ages of 10-17 (Mottin, 1980). The following account discussed the young age of the Hmong recruits:

In the early days, before I arrived, they drafted them at 16, but as their numbers dwindled they started taking them as young as 12. When they ran out of those, they conscripted them at 10, and would have taken them younger, but the Hmong are a small people and boys younger than 10 or so are just not big enough to manipulate the weapons of war. (Shanks, 1991, para. 1)
In all, a total of 30,000 Hmong men lost their lives during the Secret War in Laos (Cha et al., 2004). Gary Shanks (1991), a guest columnist for *The Fresno Bee*, reported on a child soldier, a young Hmong boy whom he encountered at the airstrip in Long Cheng. Shanks was with the pilot of the helicopter that dropped this boy soldier off at the warfront. Two days later, they picked up the boy’s body in a body bag on a stretcher where he had been dropped off. Shanks could not forget this boy’s face because he was so small that he had to be boosted into the helicopter. Shanks remembered the M-16 slung across this boy’s frail shoulder and the gun that was as tall as the boy. His trousers were gathered up around his slender waist, and his shirt was stuffed into them, down to the breast pockets, because the clothes were obviously much too big.

**Hmong in Thailand**

According to Quincy (1995), and Tapp (1986), the Hmong people from China migrated into Thailand as early as 1885. Hmong villages in Thailand continued to be found at high altitudes. Hmong villages were built near water sources in groups of about 10 homes in the beginning, and the number of houses in each village increased to as many as 100 in some villages due to the scarcity of land and to help protect one another from banditry. Thao (2006) cited an interview that was done by Bernatzik in the 1940s about conflict between the Haw Chinese and the Hmong. The Hmong knew it was best to leave China, and therefore migrated south to Thailand. According to Thao (2006), there may have been two routes coming into Northern Thailand, for both the White Hmong and the Green Hmong migrated Thailand. The Green Hmong, also known as Hmong Leng, resemble those in the northwestern Laos in Houeisai district and may have come to Thailand during the great recession in 1849-50. The second route was the one taken by the White Hmong who may have been from Luang Prabang and the
Sayaboury province where they traveled back and forth to Laos. Another scholar notes that there may be a third route into Thailand (Mottin, 1980).

Nicholas Tapp (1986) did significant research on the Hmong of Thailand. He asserted that, much like the Hmong in Vietnam and despite having been in the country for over 100 years, the Hmong in Thailand faced the same challenges. They could not have rights to land and were only given leadership roles within the village arena. The Hmong people of Thailand were subject to cruel treatment by the Thai government and singled out and blamed for environmental problems. They were relocated to the plains from their homes in the mountains and subjugated to prejudicial treatment by local Thai neighbors and governmental officials. The Hmong in Thailand were forced into urban destitution where they took up being local distributors in the drug industry, and girls were driven to the cities to be prostitutes (Tapp, 1986). As early as 1967, there was a major conflict between the Hmong people and the Thai police in the four Northern provinces. As a result of this war, many thousands of Hmong were relocated into lowland camps to undergo “accelerated acculturation” (Cooper, 1998, p. 17).

Suffering did not end when the war ended. After the Secret War in Laos and the Americans retreated, many Hmong people started fleeing to Thailand for refuge due to their involvement in the Vietnam War in Laos and because of their fear of persecution. Many Hmong people came across the Mekong River into Thailand and to the relocation camps in Nong Khai, Nam Phong, Ban Na Yao, Ban Vinai, Chiang Kham, Ban Napho, and Pha Nanikhong. Between 1975 and 1985, Thailand was home to approximately 100,000 Hmong refugees.

The first wave of refugees who were airlifted to Thailand at Nam Phong refugee camp totaled 3,000. By 1975, the number of refugees at Nam Phong was about 12,700 people. During the second wave to Thailand, there were over 43,495
refugees in Nong Khai and Vinai refugee camps by 1979. At the Nam Yao refugee camp, it was estimated that there were 10,000 Hmong refugees (Vang, 2008). Life in the Thai refugee camps was harsh, yet the Hmong could not go back to Laos, fearing they would be confronted with imprisonment or killed. Once the U.S. government, along with Canada, Europe, Argentina and French Guiana opened their doors for resettlement for these war refugees, many took the opportunity to resettle in these countries with the most of the Hmong resettling in the U.S.

**Resettlement in Third Countries**

Yang (1993) stated that after the U.S. CIA retreated in 1975, and with the takeover of the new government, General Vang Pao was the first to leave Laos in May of 1975. Following that, some 1500 Hmong who worked closely under Vang Pao were also transported to safety from Long Cheng in Thailand, and over 40,000 Hmong people fled to Thailand on foot (Yang, 1993). Many of them did not make it to Thailand due to land mines and killings from the communist soldiers who manned the border between Laos and Thailand. By 1980, there were well over 150,000 Hmong who escaped to Thailand after the initial exodus. About 130,000 Hmong refugees went to the U.S. (Faderman & Xiong, 1998). As previously mentioned, according to the U.S. Census in 2010, there were over 256,430 Hmong people living in the U.S.; however, many Hmong were believed to have been left out of the count (Pfeifer et al., 2013).

According to Johnson (2000), the Hmong refugees came in three different waves to the U.S. The first wave of refugees came between 1975 and 1979, right after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Secret War in Laos. During the second wave which took place between 1979 and 1982, there were over 300,000 people of

The Hmong people from Laos were also found in other parts of the world such as France and Germany, Argentina, Canada, Australia, and French Guiana. Lemoine (2005) estimated that there were between 4.5 and 5 million Hmong in the world at that time. Roughly 1500 were in French Guiana, 15,000 in France, 600 in Canada, and another 600 in Argentina. According to Dr. Kou Yang, due to census miscalculations and second and even third migrations, there could be as many as 300,000 Hmong in the U.S. today (personal communication, August 7, 2014).

Pfeifer and Thao (2013) shared that Hmong National Development (HND), Inc. is a national, 501(c) (3), nonprofit organization that has been a leading national policy and advocacy organization for the Hmong American community that was founded in 1993. HND has for the past 20 years provided local Hmong non-profits with capacity building and technical assistance and advocated in Washington D.C. for legislation which impacts the Hmong community by cultivating leadership and self-sufficiency. This organization was well known for the exemplary HND Conference that takes place annually around the U.S. At the time of this writing, HND has three office locations in St. Paul, Minnesota; Fresno, California; and Fayetteville, Arkansas.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census as reported by (Pfeifer et al., 2013), there was approximately 256,430 Hmong people living in the U.S. Of these Hmong inhabitants, 107,094 people were born outside of the U.S., and only 17,950 Hmong were aged 62 or older. These numbers indicated that there were very few Hmong elders left in the U.S. who knew the oral history, language, and culture of the Hmong people.
Hmong Oral Cultural Tradition

The Hmong people were traditionally an oral culture. Everything from their language to cultural beliefs and traditions had been passed down orally from one generation to the next in the form of chants, songs, poems, ritual rites, and folk and fairy tales. According to Thao (2006), most Hmong elders today do not read and write in Hmong or any other language. They still value their oral tradition very much and will hold on to it for as long as they can. The fear that the elders have is that the Hmong people will replace the oral tradition with written text since they now live in an environment rich in printed materials and with great technological advances; elders fear that this will result in the loss of the oral tradition (Thao, 2006). Hmong elders interviewed in Thao’s book, *The Hmong Oral Tradition*, believed that all Hmong people should maintain their language, culture, and customary belief system. They believed that by being well versed in the Hmong language and cultural practices, Hmong teenagers would develop a positive self-identify and would not be lost in the diverse society which made up America (Thao, 2006).

Furthermore, the Hmong people lived simple lifestyles with an extended family in a clan-based, village system. Thao (1999) described the system in the following manner:

[The Hmong are] organized strictly in a patrilineal fashion. This means that when a child is born, he/she automatically takes on the father’s clan name. However, when a Mong [sic] woman gets married, she is detached from her clan and loses all the rights provided to her from her original clan, she will assume a new identify within her husband’s new clan. (p. 11)

The clanship system is the basis of the Hmong people’s political organization in the Hmong society. They are an economically self-sufficient group of people where they raised their own livestock and grew rice, beans, and corn (Thao, 1999).
The Hmong traditionally practiced animism which was comprised of shamanism and ancestral worship (Thao, 1999). Upon coming into contact with missionaries from the West, some Hmong families adopted the Christian way of life, though traditional values of life are still being practiced to some extent today by most Hmong, regardless of religion.

As of this writing, the Hmong had a strong, cultural standard that they had passed down from one generation to the next. Those cultural standards were similar to the Bible’s Ten Commandments even though the Hmong were not originally Christians. Parents taught their children to respect all elders, to be obedient and forgiving, to speak truthfully, and not to cheat or steal. Parents also taught children to exercise humility and self-control and to live with a collective mentality versus an individualistic identity such as most Americans possess. These were cultural norms or values that had been handed down orally from parents to children for centuries. With the new lifestyle in America, however, it is difficult for parents to pass these values down to children, resulting in the loss of cultural or traditional values.

**The History of the Written Scripts**

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (WDPI) (1981) stated that linguists and anthropologists labeled Hmong as a “non-literate or pre-literate society where there [was] no generally accepted, conventional written representation of the language spoken by the people” (p. 24). Furthermore, the WDPI provided Smalley’s definition of a preliterate culture as the following:

One in which, a child can be born and grow up, an adult can live and die, without a strong need to read and write. He can live a normal existence within his own community without a feeling that he is in any way culturally deprived by lack of ability to communicate through marks on a paper. Life as he knows it does not include reading and writing as a major component. (p. 24)
Numerous Hmong legends and stories have stated that the Hmong people once had a written system back in China. However, due to war and subjugation by the Chinese, the Hmong lost their written language as they migrated from place to place in search of a peaceful homeland to call their own (Enwall, 2008). Based on an A-Hmao scholar, as translated by Enwall (2008), the Hmong had a writing system, but it was not preserved. After the Hmong king, Chiyou, was defeated by the Yellow Emperor, the Miao had to move south, and on the way across a river, the books were lost. It was also noted that as a way to preserve the writing system, Hmong women embroidered the characters onto their clothes (Enwall, 2008).

Enwall (2008) shares another legend that the Chinese and the Hmong were once brothers. Miao is the older brother, and Han is the younger brother. They studied under the same master, and each invented a writing system. However, while crossing the river, Miao had to carry his younger brother, Han, on his back, and he therefore held his script in his mouth. In the middle of the river, Miao slipped and accidentally swallowed his script whereas his little brother, Han, was holding his script in his hand and was able to preserve the writing system. Legend stated that as a result of this incident, Miao (or the Hmong) no longer had a script, while Han (the Chinese) retained a script.

**Writing Systems**

Writing was defined by Enwall (2008) as “a representation of speech in some way” (p. 155), and although a writing system for the Hmong people of Laos was only created in 1953, the Hmong have long been in contact with different writing systems for the last century (Duffy, 2007). Throughout the Hmong people’s migratory lifestyle through parts of China, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, their awareness of the different written languages created a longing for a writing
system. With this longing of a written language came the hope for political independence, a healthy identity, and the possibility of possessing some supernatural powers. Enwall (2008) claimed that the Hmong people viewed the concept of a written language as something that was of great importance despite the fact that they were an oral culture and were illiterate. Many writing systems were created to communicate and pass on religion to the minority cultures. There were some claims of a written system for the Miao people of China. The term Miao is used to refer to the all the minority groups living in China which consisted of the ancestors of the Hmong people of Laos. The earliest known script that was created for the Miao in China was by the English missionary named Samuel Pollard and is therefore called the Pollard Script. According to Enwall (2008),

The script which Pollard devised was the result of inspiration from three different sources: the Cree script devised by the English missionary James Evans in the 1840s, Pitman’s shorthand (which Pollard had learnt when training as a bank clerk in London), and the Latin script. (p. 159)

Furthermore, Smalley, Vang, and Yang (1990) explained that there have been 14 attempts to develop writing systems in the Hmong language, and of these 14 systems, six of them were currently being used. The names of these systems are as follows:

1) Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA), created by Father Yves Bertrais, Dr. Linwood Barney, and Dr. William A. Smalley in 1953
2) Pahawj Hmong, created by Shong Lue Yang
3) Chinese Romanized
4) Whitelock Lao-based system and the Whitelock Thai-based system
5) Sayaboiry system
6) Vietnamese and Pathet Lao systems (Smalley et al., 1990).
Mother of Writing

A Hmong man named Shong Lue Yang (called “the Mother of Writing” by his followers) had a significant impact on Hmong reading and writing from 1959 to when he was killed in 1971 (Smalley et al., 1990, pp. 1-2). Shong Lue Yang did not know how to read or write, yet he created not one but two alphabets for the Hmong and Khmu. His writing system symbolized pronunciation, represented all the sound contrasts and sound units smaller than the syllable, and was considered a very efficient system (Smalley et al., 1990). Shong Lue Yang was also known as the “Savior of the People,” and many of his followers flocked to him to learn the alphabets as well as “moral, ethical and religious” teaching (p. 2). Thus, another name for this script was the Messianic script.

Romanized Popular Alphabet

Although Savina developed the Romanized script for the Hmong in China in the early 1900s (Quincy, 1995), this script was lost in migration, and the Hmong people did not have a written language again until 1953. The RPA was created by William Smalley, Yves Bertrais, and Linwood Barney in Laos in 1953 (Vang, 2008). This Hmong writing system was also called “Hmong Latin writing system” by Dr. Smalley (Vang, 2008, p. 190). As missionaries made efforts to spread the Word of God in Laos to the Hmong, a Catholic priest named Father Yves Bertrais and two protestant missionaries, G. Linwood Barney and William A. Smalley, were having difficulty communicating with the Hmong due to the lack of a written language. Between June 1952 and April 1953, these three men met together to come up with a Hmong writing system. This system, known as the RPA, is an alphabet that is considered to be internally consistent and accurately represents the sound system of the Hmong. This writing system is based upon the White Hmong pronunciation and could be used for the Green and Blue Hmong
dialects as well. It was a relatively easy alphabet to learn. Because many Hmong boys went to schools in the bigger cities in Laos, it attracted many adherents as it became the means by which they communicated back and forth with families (WDPI, 1981, p. 30).

In 1962, the Hmong Literature Committee was formed with goals of writing Hmong oral literature and history, inventing new words, and publishing news in Hmong. The RPA was chaired by Lysao Lyfoung, the younger brother of Touby Lyfoung. Later on in 1962, the RPA system was approved for use, and a primer was created.

In 1968, there was pressure from the Lao government, forbidding the use of the RPA and insisting that a Lao-based alphabet must be used in its place (WDPI, 1981). William Smalley and Doris Whitelock worked together on the Lao-based alphabet and wrote two primers. After submitting the primers to the Lao government, over 10,000 copies were printed of each primer for immediate use (WDPI, 1981).

McGinn (1989) did a study on the use of the Hmong RPA by refugees who had resettled in Fresno, California. His dissertation work was entitled, “Hmong Literacy Among Hmong Adolescents and the Use of the Hmong Literacy During Resettlement.” McGinn is a Franciscan Priest and can speak in many languages, including Spanish, Hmong, Greek, and Japanese. During the early 1980s when the large wave of Hmong refugees were coming to Fresno, McGinn had the opportunity of teaching many of those Hmong students as they arrived from the refugee camps. Having worked with the Hmong students and having learned to speak the Hmong language, McGinn wanted to find out to what extent the writing system that was created in 1953 was being used during the resettlement by the Hmong adolescents in Fresno Unified School District [FUSD]. He also sought to
find how many Hmong students were literate in Hmong and where Hmong literacy was being used during the Hmong refugee’s resettlement period (McGinn, 1989).

There were several themes that emerged from McGinn’s (1989) study. His study revealed that reading and writing was a way to preserve the culture, and he found that many Hmong learned to read on their own or were self-taught, although some may have received help from friends and relatives. In addition, the data from his research indicated that there was an urgency to learn to read and write in Hmong before the culture disappeared along with the loss of the language and that schools could help in preserving the written language by offering Hmong as a foreign language while churches were teaching literacy. One last theme discovered was that the Hmong people had “an extensive oral tradition” but no history of any written literature (McGinn, 1989).

At the time of the current study, the RPA may be found as foreign language courses in high schools and higher education institutions across the U.S. Schools, hospitals, and other organizations are beginning to use the RPA to translate their newsletters and other documents for their clients (WDPI, 1981). Although the Hmong RPA system is gaining popularity and being used by a large population of the Hmong people worldwide, there is a difference between having an alphabet in one’s language and having that alphabet recognized as an official language of the people (WDPI, 1981). Unless it is being supported by the government of the country in which the Hmong live, the language—both oral and written—could eventually disappear from the lips and minds of future generations.

**History of Education in the Hmong Culture**

The teacher’s resource book, *Remembering the Hmong*, that was written by FUSD for the AB 78 Curriculum in 2006 noted that the first village school for Hmong children was not established until 1939 in Nong Het, in the Xieng
Khouang province, and only nine Hmong students were enrolled (FUSD, 2006). By the end of the 1950s, 20 villages had a school. It was not until 1966 that the first Hmong received a college degree and not until 1975 that a Hmong received a doctoral graduate. By this time, there were 30 Hmong students who were in the study-abroad programs in France and the U.S. (FUSD, 2006)

When schools were opened in some of the Hmong villages in Laos in 1939, the Lao primer and textbooks were used for teaching. Instruction, therefore, was all in Lao unless the teacher happened to be Hmong. In that case, the Hmong teacher used Hmong to supplement until the Hmong students had been taught enough Lao to be instructed in Lao alone (WDPI, 1981). According to Wa Tou Xiong and Mai Yang Xiong, only the well-to-do boys and girls could attend school. Very few girls had the opportunity to go to school since living in those times meant one had to help the family farm in order to sustain a village life (W. T. Xiong & M. Y. Xiong, personal communication, August 22, 2014; Fresno Unified, 2006). Some very affluent boys were able to be educated in the Lao and French elementary and high schools in the major cities, and a few from elite Hmong families were sent to study abroad (WDPI, 1981).

In the refugee camps in Thailand, some form of schooling was also provided to the children of Hmong families before they resettled in the U.S. and other Western countries. In addition, some adults were able to learn how to read and write in the Hmong language since they were not allowed to do much inside the camp (Quincy, 1995).

In the U.S., at the end of 2003, there were approximately 200 Hmong who had completed a doctoral degree (FUSD, 2006). As of June 2014, there were over 650 Hmong who had earned doctoral degrees in the fields including philosophy, jurisprudence, education, medicine, pharmacy, psychology, ministry and/or
theology, dental surgery, chiropractic, podiatry medicine, oriental medicine, naturopathic, optometry, osteopathy, business administration and dental medicine (Yang, 2013).

**Language Dialects**

Although some researchers claimed that the Hmong language is a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, others argued that Hmong is derived from the Austro-Tai family of languages (Bliatout et al., 1988; Vang, 2008). However, the Hmong Language is mostly related to the Miao-Yao languages of Southern China and Southeast Asia (Bliatout et al., 1988). See Figure 1 for a diagram of the Hmong language family.

It was estimated that the Miao people are the largest ethnic minority of China which includes the Hmong, the Mhu, and the Qo Hsiong and about three million people speak one or more of the Miao-Yao languages, of which there are 18 Hmongic varieties (Downing et al., 1988). According to Thao (1999) and McGinn (1989), the Hmong language is classified as a monosyllabic, tonal language, yet it has disyllabic and polysyllabic words. The Hmong RPA uses the 26 letters of the Roman alphabet. There are 17 single consonants, 22 double consonants, 15 triple consonants, 3 quadruple consonants, 6 single vowels and 7 double vowels along with 8 tone markers in the Hmong writing system (McGinn, 1989).

In his study, McGinn (1989) analyzed the Hmong language concisely and shared that the Hmong language is “an analytic language” (p. 15). He asserted that the difference between the English language and the Hmong language is that each syllable in the Hmong language is a word, where the English language allows for prefixes and suffixes. In addition, McGinn (1989) stated,
Hmong has no inflections; nouns do not have inflectional plurals, and verbs have no suffixes to indicate time or agreement. A word can precede or follow the verb to indicate time, but it can be left out if the tense of the verb is clear from the context. (p. 15)

*Figure 1.* Hmong language family diagram. Adapted from Lemoine (1972), Strecker (1987), and Neiderer (2000).

McGinn (1989) diagramed a chart showing the eight tones and the approximate tone contour used in the Hmong language (p. 16). This chart was adapted from McGinn’s work (see Figure 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Spelled in RPA</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Tone Marker</th>
<th>Approximate Tone Contour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dab</td>
<td>trough, spirit</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>high level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daj</td>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>high falling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dav</td>
<td>large, wide, eagle</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>mid rising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>da</td>
<td>lie down, bathe</td>
<td>no letter</td>
<td>mid-level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tas</td>
<td>finish,</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>long low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dag</td>
<td>Lie</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>breathy low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dam</td>
<td>broken, break</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>short low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawd</td>
<td>stiff, hard, skin, covering</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>glottalized low-mid-low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.* Use of final consonant as tone marker. Adapted from “Hmong Literacy Among Hmong Adolescents and the Use of Hmong Literacy During Resettlement, by F. J. McGinn, 1989.

As with all languages that come in contact with other languages, the Hmong language also has many borrowed words, including some from Yunnanese, Laotian, and Thai (Yang, 1992). Like the Chinese language, the Miao language has initials, finals, and tones which make them structurally similar. The ancient Miao language also consisted of eight tones as the Hmong dialects do today (Enwall, 2008, p. 155).

There are many dialects in the Miao language; however, two dialects are spoken by the Miao living outside of China; these include the Hmong people of Laos who are now residing in the U.S., Thailand, Laos, Canada, Australia, Argentina, French Guiana, Germany, and France (FUSD, 2006, p. 21). The first
dialect is the White Hmong dialect (Hmoob dawb), and the second is spoken by the Green Hmong or Blue Hmong (Hmoob lees). According to scholars, the Green Hmong or Blue Hmong dialect and the White Hmong dialect can be understood by both groups. The two groups have lived among each other for centuries, having intermarried and respected each other’s differences, and have preserved their own dialects (Vang & Lewis, 1984; Thao, 1999; Trueba et al., 1990; WDPI 1981).

Thao (1999) posited that there are two known spellings for the word Hmong. When it is spelled with an aspirated “H,” it is referring to White Hmong whereas the Green Hmong or Blue Hmong would much prefer to use the spelling “Mong” to refer to themselves (Thao, 1999). As previously mentioned, the distinction here is on the basis of the color of their clothing and does not relate to skin color (Vang, 2003). The Green or Blue Hmong (Mong) is called such because the ladies’ skirts are dyed using a green or blue dye. Likewise, the White Hmong ladies’ skirts are left their original white (Thao, 1999; Vang, 2003).

Trueba et al. (1990) stated that despite some differences in clothing, pronunciation of some words, certain vocabulary words, and ritual practices, the White Hmong and the Green/Blue Mong have unique common characteristics. Those commonalities are:

1) The two dialects are mutually intelligible.

2) There is a strong belief in ancestor worship and animism.

3) They use the established division of labor according to family membership and sex.

4) There is a social structure based on kinship ties through patrilineage and clan systems.

5) They use a patrivirilocal pattern of residence.
6) There is a shared history of migration from southern China.

7) They have a long tradition of being stateless.

**Language**

It is not known when the first human being started talking; however, some researchers believed that long ago, our ancestors all spoke the same language while others believed that several languages emerged in several places at the same time, based upon the ancient legend and the story of the Tower of Babel (Language, 1999). Researchers have contended that all living species must communicate in order to survive (Language, 1999). When animals send a message, others of their species may comprehend it. Whether the message is by spraying an area with a body scent to mark a territory or singing a song as a courting ritual, it is a form of communication. The form of communication that human beings use is language. This is a communication system that is very complex, and it may be used to express anything from basic needs to things that do not even exist.

Linguists also estimated that there are 3,000-6,000 languages that are spoken today, and it is impossible to get a precise figure of the different languages because there is great difficulty in distinguishing a dialect from a language (Language, 1999). Human beings have been talking for thousands of years, yet with time, languages die out. Because the English language currently reigns supreme in many countries of the world, other languages that come into contact with English are often threatened.

When languages die, there are serious consequences (Language, 1999). The different societies in which we all live enrich our lives in immeasurable ways. Each language and culture with which we come into contact brings a large body of knowledge with it. Language has a way of opening up new worlds to us. Without
language there is a limited opportunity in which to express ourselves (Language, 1999).

Since language is a direct link to the culture and traditional practices of the speakers of that language, Dr. Jonas Vangay’s definition of language is by far most descriptive and conclusive:

By definition, a language, as one of the most important elements of a culture, directly shapes a particular group of people. It defines the ethnicity of that group of people, their identity, and their social place in the mainstream of society. Hmong language, whether oral or written, is the central force that drives Hmong social activity and education, culture and belief, politics and clan relationships. It also transcribes the historical background, describes the current lifestyle, and predicts the future of the Hmong people. (Vangay & Xiong, 2001, p. 4)

**Language Contact**

Before a language becomes endangered, a social or political shift must occur to create contact with a dominant language. Language contact is defined by Thomason (2001) as “the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time” (p. 1). Language contact comes about when there is “movement of one group into another group’s territory” (p. 17). Thomason stated, “a related route to language contact is the immigration of small groups or scattered individual speakers who join the preexisting population rather than conquering them or otherwise taking over their territory” (p. 18).

In the case of the Hmong people, war refugees had to escape persecution in Laos due to their involvement with the American CIA during the Vietnam War. When the Hmong resettled in different states all across the U.S., they lived among English speakers. This was the onset of the language contact between the Hmong language and English. The Hmong had to use English in order to find employment and to make a living in the new country, while at the same time, they
had to maintain their home language in order to communicate with their Hmong community.

Thomason (2001) explained that language contact may occur through education or learned contacts as well. Because the use of English is so widespread, and it is the international language for communication on the internet and to function well in the global market, many people in numerous countries have learned English (Thomason, 2001). Given any contact setting, the present situation may be changed by unpredictable social factors. Once two languages come in contact, one of those languages has to be the dominant, and one has to be the minority. In most cases, the minority language will lose its usage and before long, it may be at risk of disappearing from its community of speakers.

A good example of a contact where a minority language survived is the Catalonian community in the northeast corner of Spain (Blot, 2003). It is unusual to see a minority language being alive and well after its speakers experienced centuries of subordination and decades of state repression. However, the Catalan language is thriving today because Catalonia became a politically autonomous community in 1980. People in the Catalan community speak Catalan which is a minority language. They attribute the success of maintaining the Catalan language to the public policies that were put in place, but the success is also due in large part to the prestigious status of the language since most Catalans were found to be in the upper and middle classes, and the speakers of Castilian were concentrated mostly in the working class and unskilled workers (Blot, 2003). Woolard (2003), a Catalan demographer, defines what it means to be a Catalan by saying, “a Catalan is a person [gentleman] who speaks Catalan” (p. 86).

Some generalizations may be made about language policies in multilingual states that will predict the success or failure of that language (Fase, Jaespert, &
Kroon, 1992). When two languages come in contact, one of three things will happen: language maintenance, bilingualism, or language shift. The case studies that follow illustrate the factors that have helped with language maintenance, bilingualism, or language shift.

As mentioned earlier, the Catalonia language is found in northern Spain and represents a successful case of language maintenance as shared by Woolard (2003). Catalan is a minority language in Spain and its use was forbidden for use since 1716. A decree was issued where only Castilian was allowed. However in 1979, it was noted that Catalan was spoken by 97% of the natives and 78% of residents, which indeed means that the language was maintained (Woolard, 2003). Also in 1979, there was increased social and political pressure to use Catalan (Woolard, 2003). As with most cases of minority and dominant language contact, the minority language is usually overridden by the dominant language in a few generations. Catalan has, however, experienced a rare case of success in the history of language maintenance.

The Hawaiian language is another language that has undergone significant decrease in use, and currently, work is being done to increase the number of speakers (Akasaka, Shin, & Stein, 2008). Hawaiian was one of the two official languages of Hawaii that were used in oral storytelling, songs, and religion. In the 19th century, there were about 37,000 native speakers. In 2008, there were only 8,000 speakers in a population of 400,000. The reason for this drastic drop in the number of speakers was that natives wanted their children to excel in their education, and therefore, they stopped using the Hawaiian language at home (Akasaka et al., 2008).

Akasaka et al. (2008) reported that the Hawaiian language has taken “the most developed movement in indigenous language-medium education in the United
States” (para. 3). Furthermore, the authors shared that a concerted effort in 1984 brought back Hawaiian immersion schools, including Punana Leo immersion preschools for students between 2-5 years of age and Kula Kaiapuni (elementary to high school). In 1998, the University of Hawaii offered Bachelor of Arts degrees in Hawaiian and established programs in teacher preparation, focusing on Kula Kaiapuni teachers. At the time this case study took place, there were 11 Punana Leo preschools and 1500 students in kindergarten through 12th grade in the Kula Kaiapuni program. It was noted that the first high school students who were educated in the Hawaiian Language Immersion Program graduated in 1999 (Akasaka, et al., 2008).

**Language Endangerment**

Language endangerment is when two languages come into contact, and the first language (or mother tongue) is used less and less while use of the second language increases with the possibility that the first language may eventually be replaced by the second (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Nettle and Romaine (2000) described the vulnerability of a language when it comes into contact with other languages:

A language is not a self-sustaining entity. It can only exist where there is a community to speak and transmit it. A community of people can exist only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. (p. 5)

Janse & Tol (2003), reported that there were only 6,909 languages listed in the 2009 edition of the *Ethnologue*, and it is believed that more than half of these languages are in danger of disappearing this century. Xiong & Xiong (2011), a Hmong scholar, reported a decline in the use of the Hmong native language among second-generation, Hmong students. Looking at data from 2005-2009, he
concluded that 3.9% of first-generation, Hmong students speak only English at home, and 10.6% of second-generation, Hmong students speak only English. In another study, Xiong (2012) stated that although only 3% of Hmong Americans spoke only English in 1990, between 2006 and 2010, that percentage had increased to 8% speaking only English. In addition, Dr. Va at California State University, Sacramento observed that 92% of his Hmong students at the college level could not read or write in Hmong. Only 8% could read simple Hmong sentences, but they could not write in Hmong (Va, 2011). This shift from their native language to English is a predictor of the loss of their ethnic identity because language plays a critical role in maintaining that cultural identity and group boundary (Keiser, 2003).

Languages that are in the process of dying are considered to be endangered languages. According to Wurm (2003), there are five levels of language endangerment:

1) A language is potentially endangered if the children start preferring the dominant language and learn the obsolescing language imperfectly.

2) It is endangered if the youngest speakers are young adults, and there are no or very few child speakers.

3) It is seriously endangered if the youngest speakers are middle-aged or past middle age.

4) It is terminally endangered or moribund if there are only a few elderly speakers left.

5) A language is dead when there are no speakers left at all. (p. 16)

Newman (2003) acknowledges that it was only around the mid-1980s that linguists realized that languages were disappearing, and they began to focus on this issue by creating committees, organizations, and foundations. Linguists pointed out that “the disappearance of languages and linguistic diversity is a major loss to linguistic scholarship and science” (Newman, 2003, p. 1). Although the
endangered status of a language could mean that it is closer to the death or
disappearance of that language, Janse and Tol (2003) remarked that it could bring
about a powerful awareness and “reawakening of ethnic identity feelings among
speakers of endangered minority languages” which could result in “an increased
interest in language maintenance” (p. x).

Edwards (1992) described three typological approaches that could help
determine the situation of a language. One approach was created by Haugen (as
cited in Edwards, 1992) which included 10 ecological questions that provide an
outline or framework for languages to be considered:

1) How is the language classified vis-à-vis other languages (matter for
historical and descriptive linguistics)?
2) Who uses the language (linguistic demography)?
3) What are the domains of the language (sociolinguistics)?
4) What other languages are used by its speakers (dialinguistics)?
5) What are the language’s internal varieties (dialectology)?
6) What are its written traditions (philology)?
7) What is the language’s degree of standardization (prescriptive
linguistics)?
8) What institutional support does the language have (glottopolitics)?
9) What attitudes toward the language are held by its speakers
(ethnolinguistics)?
10) Where do all these factors place the language in relation to other
languages (ecological classification)? (Edwards, 1992, p. 43)

The second model was known as the “most methodical and systematic
attempt,” and this work was done by Haarmann (as cited in Edwards, 1992).
There were only seven basic categories of ecological variable under this method:

1) Ethnodemographic variables (including size and concentration of the
language group, urban-rural distinctions, etc.)
2) Ethnosociological variables (sex, age, social stratification, degree of
endogamy-exogamy, etc.)
3) Ethnopolitical variables (group-state relations, institutional status of language, etc.)

4) Ethnocultural variables (descent criteria, organization promotion of group interests, characteristics of the written language, etc.)

5) Ethnopsychological variables (attitudes towards other ethnic groups, the language-identity relationship, etc.)

6) Interactional variables (communicational mobility, language variety use by topic and situational, etc.)

7) Ethnolinguistic variables (linguistic distance between contact languages etc.). (Haarmann as cited in Edwards, 1992, p. 45)

Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977) came up with the third typological model. Their questions about language were viewed as having strength, and the subjective vitality questionnaire has been used in many cultural contexts. The following is a list of these questions:

1. How highly regarded are the following languages [insert languages] in (name of state/country)?

2. How proud of their cultural history and achievements are the following groups?

3. Estimate the birth rates of the following groups [as above] in [name of country].

4. To what extent do the following groups marry only within their own groups?

5. How much are the following languages taught in [country]?

6. How much are the following languages taught in schools?

7. How much political power do the following groups have in [name of state]?

These three approaches to finding the state of a language were all criticized as having been too general. It was recommended that in order for such a typology of language maintenance and language loss to work, it must be comprehensive (Edwards, 1992). Although this last approach may provide meaningful information, all three approaches were said to “lack breadth and specificity”
(Edwards, 1992, p. 47). Despite these difficulties, the models do make valuable contributions and provide for a starting point. Other possibilities will surely come up as more research is done so that a more comprehensive tool could be devised, leading to a more complete conceptualization of minority language situations. This will also allow for predictions to be made on the outcomes of language shift and maintenance (Edwards, 1992, p. 48).

**Language Shift**

In this author’s experience in running a Hmong summer program that taught Hmong language and culture to a group of over 150 Hmong students from preschool to 12th grade, the author noted that there appeared to be a language loss occurring with Hmong students and parents. These Hmong were conversing in both English and Hmong in what is termed code switching (Thao, 1999), but this is also an example of language loss. Language loss is defined by Van Els (as cited in Kouritzin, 1999) as “a loss of a first language in a second language environment” (p. 12). It occurs when a speaker cannot use the primary language in the same capacity as before.

The Hmong parents mentioned above would start speaking in Hmong to their children, use English words in the middle of their sentences, and then switch back to Hmong words to get an idea across. This seemed to be the norm for many of the parents who were between the ages of 20-50 years. This phenomenon was noted by Thao (1999) who wrote that Hmong families have experienced tremendous native language and culture loss because they use both English and Hmong to communicate at home (p. 90). For example, the parents will say, “Hnub no peb yuav mus saib Grandma vim yog nws lub birthday,” which translates to, “Today, we will go see Grandma because it’s her birthday.” The students may
say, “Kuv xav mus buy her a present, koj puas kam?” which means, “I wish to go buy her a present. Is that okay with you?”

Language shift is when speakers of a certain language stop using the primary language altogether and do not teach it to their children (Dalby, 2003). Language shift takes place when a group of people migrate to an area in which another language is dominant and stops using the primary language in a period of three generations (Fase et al., 1992). A primary reason for this shift is that speakers find that their need to survive is better served by the other language, and therefore, they see no need to maintain their primary language. One may see this occurring with the Hmong people who came from Laos into America where they had to learn a new language and culture in order to survive.

When some Hmong students speak, they tend to switch back and forth between two languages; this is termed code-switching (Thao, 1999). Thao (1999) concluded in his research that Hmong students experienced “tremendous native language and culture loss,” and he gave several examples of code-switching as a sign of language loss (p. 90). However, other literature disputed this claim. In 2009, Ofelia Garcia proposed the term Translanguaging which Creese and Blackledge say “refers to the multiple discursive practices in which multilingual speakers engage in order to make sense of their worlds. Translanguaging goes beyond code-switching, but incorporates it” (Creese & Blackledge, 2010, p. 555). Creese and Blackledge (2010) further noted that,

[translanguaging includes but extends what others have called language use and language contact among multilinguals. Garcia argues that rather than focusing on the language itself, translanguaging makes it apparent that there are no clear-cut boundaries between the languages of bilinguals. (p. 555)]

In addition to translanguaging, Jorgensen (as cited in Creese & Blackledge, 2010) argues that the modern society of today creates this “fluidity” where people’s
identities are not imposed, but can be negotiable in certain settings (p. 556).

Creese and Blackledge (2010) added:

Jorgensen goes on to propose that language users create, construct, and negotiate identities on the basis of a range of resources with can be associated with meaning. To the extent that such resources are part of language, identities are constructed and negotiated in linguistic discourse. Identities are performed, constructed, enacted, and produced, but only in interaction with others. (p. 556)

Due to interracial marriages and living in isolation from the urban Hmong communities, some Hmong families now have stopped using Hmong altogether. Ningsheng (1992) remarked that the Chinese tend to marry within their community and build cities inside cities and communities within communities called China Towns, and the Chinese are therefore able to maintain their language and culture over the more than 200 years that they have been in the U.S. Unlike the Chinese, the Hmong in America are spread all over the U.S. and have not built cities within cities like China Towns. The Hmong have married outside of their Asian race and do not have opportunities to utilize their primary language on a daily basis as have the Chinese in China Towns across America. What is to be done so that the Hmong people can maintain their language? Language maintenance will be the key to preserving Hmong language and culture for future Hmong students.

**Language Maintenance**

Language maintenance is defined as the ability to speak and use the language a person was born into despite having been in contact with a dominant language (Ningsheng, 1992). Maintaining a language in the presence of the English language has been known to be a great challenge in the U.S. (Ningsheng, 1992, para. 2). The English language has been referred to as the “killer language” or “predator” language by linguists (Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000).
Also, Gibbons and Ramirez (2004) stated that Hornberger referred to English as a “predator” language that has put languages around the world in danger. Ningsheng (1992) stated that to speak the non-English language is considered to be a temporary phenomenon where speakers are just delaying the inevitable loss of their mother tongue (para. 3).

Although the maintenance of primary languages is difficult, studies have shown that language maintenance does exist in the U.S. Ningsheng (1992) asserted that the Chinese language is an example of successful language maintenance since it is still widely used today even though the Chinese people have been in the U.S. for over 200 years. Furthermore, Ningsheng (1992) claimed that the two factors that have positive effects on language maintenance and negative effects on language shift are the socioeconomic status and residential patterns of the speakers of the non-English language (para. 5). More specifically, speakers who live near to each other have more opportunities to use and maintain their native language. In addition, the more educated and well off minority parents are, the more emphasis may be put on maintaining the native language.

In order to know what to do to stop or delay language loss and when to do it, Fishman (2001) proposed the use of the 8-stage Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) which can identify “the prospects for the continuing usage of a particular language in a community” (p. 28). Fishman noted that language loss cannot be defined as an absolute, but languages can go through the different stages of language loss. Table 1 provides Fishman’s eight stages of language endangerment.
Table 1

*Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Language Usage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Some use of Xish in higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political independence)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of the Xish neighborhood/community) involving interaction between Xmen and Ymen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Xish in lower education (types a and b) that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Xish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extracommunal reinforcement of such literacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Most vestigial users of Xish are socially isolated old folks, and Xish needs to be re-assembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* X stands for any language

After a language has been identified by the 8-stage GIDS, maintenance of an endangered language can be achieved either through legislation (known as a top-down approach), or from the community with ethnic pride (known as a bottom-up approach) (Fishman, 2001). The decision about whether or not to maintain a language once it has been identified as being endangered must be made by the community whose native language is endangered (Fishman, 2001).

The Navajo language that was used a decade ago was different from that used a generation ago. It currently faces an uncertain future; therefore, Fishman’s GIDS was used to assess the language’s existence and continuity (Fishman, 2001). Following the assessment of the Navajo language, it was affirmed that the language was under ever-increasing assault and that more and more Navajo people were switching to the use of English (Fishman, 2001). It is alarming that very few people are aware of the great threat of language loss that is currently evident in the
Navajo community. With the help of the GIDS, lists of activities were developed and implemented to intervene and reverse the language shift of the Navajo language (Fishman, 2001). These activities included what an individual can do, what pairs of persons can do, what families can do, and what communities can do to combat language loss and reverse language shift in this community. Beyond these levels, it was recommended that “overtly political and ideological actions” be taken to help with the language revival efforts (Fishman, 2001, p. 40).

Following these initiatives, the Navajo language is currently on its way to a better future. More than 200 activists are attending the quarterly meetings each year, Navajo language teachers are earning bachelor’s degrees, and more than 160 Head Start centers are using the Navajo language for instruction (Fishman, 2001).

Trying to maintain a language could involve psychological risks and the investment of time, money, and energy on the part of the community; however, there are some individual, family, community and national benefits when a minority language is maintained (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004). The individual benefits of maintaining the first language are that one has a more positive self-concept, more travel and employment opportunities, better cognitive flexibility, and attains higher levels of proficiency and literacy in the second language. As a benefit to the family and community, it strengthens the bond of family and relatives and contributes to community pride and unity. As an added benefit to the nation, maintaining a language can translate into meeting the needs of being culturally competent citizens internationally (Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004). As cited in Fishman et al. (1966), Professor Trond Bothne of Luther College in 1898 said,

Now the question no longer is: how shall we learn English so that we may take part in the social life of America and partake of her benefits; the big question is: how can we preserve the language of our ancestors here, in a strange environment, and pass on to our descendants the treasures which it contains? (page preceding introduction)
The status of a language and having access to the productive use of the language are the mechanisms in which a language may possibly be maintained (Minet & Wang, 2008). Therefore, Crystal (2000) has identified six main mechanisms for intervening in the work of maintaining a language:

1) Increasing the prestige of its speakers
2) Increasing the wealth of its speakers
3) Increasing the power of the speakers
4) Improving its presence in the educational system
5) Ensuring that the language be written down
6) Providing access to electronic technology to its speakers.

As for the Hmong language, there have been stories, legends, and Hmong history and cultural practices written down in the Hmong language, yet these are very limited in number at the present. The Hmong language has also been taught in some high schools and colleges in a few cities in the U.S. for the last 10 years. In 2011, Microsoft adopted the Hmong language for translation, which means that more Hmong students will be able to access the Hmong language. However, the first three mechanisms mentioned above will take time to establish, and until it is, the Hmong language will be difficult to maintain.

Summary

Hmong are known to have originated in China. Currently, they are spread all over the world and can be found in China, Vietnam, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Argentina, Canada, the U.S., France, Germany and Australia. Through their migrations all over the world, they have continued to hold onto their language and culture as best as they could. In the land of the free and the home of the brave, however, it has been difficult for them to maintain their language and culture since their arrival in the U.S. in the late 1970s and to the present.
Literature on the topic of language shift and maintenance stated that many languages have disappeared and more will die. Janse (2003) pointed out that, due to socioeconomic and sociopolitical factors, many languages will die off. Sasse estimated (as cited in Janse & Tol, 2003) that in the last 500 years, half of the world’s languages have disappeared. It was also estimated that 50-70 years from now, 90% of the languages will no longer be in existence. Linguists also predicted that at the rate at which languages are disappearing from the world today, there will only be about 100 languages left in the world by the middle of the 21st century (Language, 1999). In an article found in Txhawb, a Hmong magazine, Dr. Ka Va summed up very well what it means to lose a language and stressed the importance of maintaining a language when in contact with a national language such as English:

In conclusion, losing a language is equivalent to losing part of one’s culture and identity. In today’s cultural, educational, social, political, rapidly changing global and technological society, language continues to be of primary importance in maintaining one’s identity. No matter how high Hmong people leap, how far Hmong people wander, and how deeply Hmong people study and understand one another, the importance of language plays a pivotal role in our life. As with most immigrants and refugees, the Hmong way of life changes and transforms when we are immersed in a different language. Minority languages change as they are influenced by the majority language. […] With more than 300 languages spoken in the United States, much of our language, as is true of other minority languages, will disappear unless a conscious effort is made to maintain them. The question is whether we can find ways to maintain and preserve part of our ancestor’s life that is so precious to us. (Va, 2011, p. 3)
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current level of Hmong participants’ speaking, reading, and writing ability as well as their perceptions of cultural values and how these factors pertain to language and cultural maintenance in the U.S. The Hmong people are one of the newest refugees to have come to America in the last 40 years. According to data from the Census 2010 (HND, 2013), there were over 256,430 Hmong people residing in the U.S.; however, there were only about 17,950 Hmong elders who were 62 years of age and older. This means that there are very few repositories of the Hmong language, culture, and history left. This study examined the match between Hmong language skills and values, hopes, and awareness within the Hmong community that some concerted efforts must take place in order to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations.

Research Design

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding language maintenance and language loss with other cultures and languages; however, very little has been written about the Hmong people’s language loss or maintenance. This study used an explanatory sequential mixed methods design. A survey was used to collect the quantitative data. Face-to-face interviews were conducted using open-ended questions pertaining to language maintenance and questions pertaining to cultural maintenance.

Gall et al. (2010) commented that questionnaires usually measure many variables. In addition, an interview “involve[d] the collection of data through direct interaction between the researcher and the individuals being studied” (p.
According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), there are six advantages for using mixed methods:

1) Mixed methods research provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research.

2) Mixed methods research provides more evidence for studying a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative research alone.

3) Mixed methods research helps answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative or qualitative approaches alone.

4) Mixed methods provide a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative researchers.

5) Mixed methods research encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms (i.e., beliefs and values), rather than the typical association of certain paradigms with quantitative research and others for qualitative research.

6) Mixed methods research is “practical in the sense that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem.” (p. 12)

It was suggested by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011) that the explanatory sequential design is best when the researcher is constrained by time, feels there is equal value in collecting and evaluating both kinds of data, and can manage extensive data.

**Research Questions**

The overarching question was: “What are the current skills and perceptions of Hmong speaking, reading, writing among the Hmong people, what are their perceptions of their cultural values, and how does this information pertain to language and cultural maintenance?” Specific research questions were:

1) What is the present level of Hmong speaking, reading, and writing ability and cultural values, and how does this information relate to other demographic information?
2) What are the Hmong community, families, and organizations in the U.S. currently doing to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations of Hmong?

**Participants/Sample**

Prior to the Hmong New Year, the researcher went on Hmong Radio and Hmong TV to publicize the intent of the study and where it would be taking place. The researcher also outlined the benefits of the research to the Hmong community and shared the benefits of participants’ involvement in the research. The researcher and all research assistants wore T-shirts to identify themselves as researchers from Fresno State. Fliers were handed out at the three entrances to the Hmong New Year event along with one raffle ticket per flier. The researcher and research assistants provided directions to where the research booth was located.

All participants were provided with an incentive for participating in the research. The initial incentive was a globe stress-ball which they could use for de-stressing and for playing the Hmong New Year game of ball tossing. Each participant received a raffle ticket to be entered into a drawing for $100 on the last day of the Hmong New Year.

For the quantitative survey part of the study, participants consisted of a convenience sample. Survey data were collected at the Hmong International New Year which takes place from December 26 to January 1 of every year. This event was attended by Hmong people from all over the U.S., including countries such as Australia, Canada, France, Laos, and Thailand. Those attending were between the ages of 18-80 years. The participants were approached at the Hmong International New Year in Fresno, California and were asked to take the survey by the researcher and her research assistants. The researcher realized that there would be more young Hmong people in attendance than older Hmong; however, the
researcher made a concerted effort to ensure that the participants from the different age groups were equally represented. Those age groups included young adults (18-34 years); slightly older, married, middle-aged adults (35-54 years); and older adults (55 years and older). The goal was to survey about 50 individuals per day for a total of about 250 participants.

For the face-to-face interviews, the researcher used a purposeful sampling method. In addition, the researcher chose to use the strategy known as “maximal variation sampling” where the diverse groups of individuals were chosen because they held different perspectives about the topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 174). All the face-to-face interview participants were surveyed and had agreed to be interviewed before the researcher contacted them for the face-to-face interviews. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), “Purposeful sampling in qualitative research means that researchers intentionally select (or recruit) participants who have experienced the central phenomenon or the key concept being explored in the study” (p. 173).

The participants for the face-to-face interview consisted of three females and three males ranging from 18-70 years of age or older (see Table 2). Two participants were chosen from each of three, Hmong-language, proficiency groups and age groups: the intermediate language proficiency group (ages of 18-28); the middle-aged, adult, married, early-advanced language-proficiency group (ages 29-45); and the older, advanced/fluent language-proficiency group (46 and older).

According to the California English Language Development Test (CELDT) that had been given to English Language Learners (ELL) annually, there were five levels of English proficiency into which ELL students were classified (California
Department of Education [CDE], 2013). When ELL were evaluated on their speaking, reading, and writing, they were compared to English-Only speakers and were given a rating of Beginning, Intermediate, Early Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. Once they were rated as being at the Advanced level, they were redesignated or classified as Fluent Proficiency which means they had the equivalent skills of English speakers (CDE, 2013). This was the ultimate goal for all ELL. Because the Hmong children who were born in America were also learning their Hmong language in addition to the English language, the researcher used the CELDT levels as a rating scale with some modifications on the levels to apply to the participants in this study in terms of their Hmong language skills. The researcher modified the levels to just include three levels of proficiency which were Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced/Fluent to use for this study. The Beginning and Early Intermediate levels, according to the CELDT, were intentionally left out because these two levels applied more to children in the elementary school level. The last three stages or levels were used since the participants were 18 years of age or older, and only those in the last three stages or levels were recruited to be interviewed.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Category and Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young, Single (18-28), Intermediate Proficiency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young adult, Married (29-45), Early Advanced Proficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Age (46- older), Advanced/Fluent Proficiency</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Interviews</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The rationale for choosing the face-to-face interview groups in this way was that the young, single group was most likely to have a low ability rating or to be considered at the Intermediate level in speaking, reading, and writing in the Hmong language. The middle-aged, married group was most likely to be rated as having middle ability or Early Advanced in terms of speaking, reading and writing, and the older age group was most likely to be rated as having high ability in reading, speaking, and writing or Advanced or Fluent Proficiency. Prior to the interviews, it was believed that some of the older group members may have been fluent speakers; however, it was believed that their reading and writing abilities may have been splintered, depending upon what opportunities were given them while growing up in Laos or here in the U.S.

**Instrumentation**

Two instruments were used in this study: the Perceptions on Hmong Language and Cultural Values Survey (see Appendix A), administered during the Hmong New Year; and the Language and Cultural Maintenance Interview Protocol (see Appendix B), administered on a one-on-one basis.

**Quantitative: The Perceptions on Hmong Language and Cultural Values Survey**

This survey was developed by the researcher and reflected information from the GIDS which was developed by Fishman (2001). The survey questions asked about the following: gender; birth year; marital status; number and ages of children; language spoken to and by children and participants; year of arrival to the U.S.; city and state of residence; parents’ native language; religion; educational level of parents and self; age when entered U.S. school system; rating of participant’s speaking, reading, and writing ability in Hmong; Hmong writing
systems known and used by participants; and Hmong radio listening and TV-watching behaviors. The survey also included questions on the importance of speaking, reading, and writing Hmong for participants and their children as well as questions about Hmong culture. Finally, the survey asked participants to read, translate, and speak in Hmong. These last three questions were tape-recorded, and a number was assigned to match this verbal data with the written survey. From the last series of questions, the researcher developed ratings for speaking, reading, and writing ability in Hmong which paralleled the CELDT proficiency levels. The survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

Qualitative: Language and Cultural Maintenance Protocol

This study adapted qualitative questions which Andrea Withers (2013) developed for her thesis “Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced” (See Appendix B). These questions were as follows:

Language Maintenance Protocol

1) Do you think that the Hmong that you speak is different from the Hmong that your (parents, children, grandchildren, grandparents, etc.) speak?
2) If it is, how is it different, and why do you think it is different?
3) If it is not different, why do you think it has been able to stay the same?
4) What do you think would happen if a Hmong person did not learn how to speak Hmong?
5) What effect would that have on his/her life as well as the lives of others in the Hmong community?
6) What do you do to make sure that you do not forget how to speak Hmong?
7) What do you do to make sure that your children do not forget how to speak Hmong?
8) What places in your city can you see Hmong in print?
9) What places in your city can you hear the Hmong language?
10) What places in your city can you see Hmong people?
11) What do you think your city can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong language alive and strong?
12) What helped you to learn Hmong?
13) What helped you to maintain Hmong language?
14) What do you think schools can do to help preserve and pass on the Hmong language to Hmong students?
15) What do you think community based organizations can do to help preserve and pass on the Hmong language to Hmong students?

**Cultural Maintenance Protocol**

1) What makes you Hmong?
2) In what situations or occasions do you identify yourself as Hmong? As American? Why?
3) What Hmong values do you value the most? American values? Why?
4) How would you identify the way that you live in terms of being mostly Hmong or mostly American or equally Hmong and American? Why?
5) In your life, do you feel like you keep your Hmong culture?
6) If you do, what do you do to make sure that you keep your Hmong culture?
7) If you do, what do you do to make sure that your children keep your Hmong culture?
8) If you do not, why do you think you are not keeping your Hmong culture?

9) Do you think that the people of your community support the Hmong community by celebrating your culture? Why? Why not?

10) What do you think the mainstream community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong culture alive and strong?

11) How often do you consult your parents or siblings about life decisions?

12) How much influence do your parents have on your daily decision-making?

13) How do you show respect to your parents, grandparents, or elders?

**Pilot**

The Perceptions of Hmong Language and Culture Maintenance Survey was piloted to a small sample of young, middle-aged, and older Hmong. These participants were instructed to inform the researcher if there was anything about the survey that was unclear to them. The survey was revised accordingly before being used in the research.

Prior to the Hmong New Year, the researcher went on Hmong Radio and Hmong TV to publicize the intent of the study and where it was taking place. The researcher also outlined the benefits of the research to the Hmong community and shared the benefits of participants’ involvement in the research. The researcher and all research assistants wore T-shirts to identify themselves as researchers from Fresno State. Fliers were handed out at the three entrances to the Hmong New Year event along with one raffle ticket per flier. The researcher and research assistants provided directions to where the research booth was located. In addition, all participants were provided with an incentive for participating in the research. The initial incentive was a globe-decorated, stress ball which they could
use for de-stressing and for playing the Hmong New Year game of ball tossing. Each participant who turned in the raffle ticket was entered into a drawing for $100 on the last day of the Hmong New Year. Face-to-face interviewees were each given a $20 gift card or cash in appreciation of their time contributing to the research.

**Training of Research Assistants**

During the first weekend of December 2014, the researcher conducted training for all the research assistants who helped with the data collection. The researcher performed some role-playing on how to approach participants, how to ask participants for their consent to participate in the research, and how to ask the questions from the survey. In addition, research assistants learned how to record participant as well as their own reactions while collecting data. They notated whether or not the participants or they themselves felt rushed or unfocused. They also recorded the number of participants whom they approached but did not want to participate. The researcher also trained research assistants about language rating and how to rate if someone read, spoke, or wrote at the intermediate, early advanced, or advanced level.

**Data Collection**

Before collecting data, the IRB for human subjects was approved. All participants were asked to sign a consent form before being allowed to participate in the research (See Appendix C). This form was explained to all participants. The data for this study was gathered through surveys as well as face-to-face interviews. Participants were surveyed at the Hmong International New Year from the last week of December 2014 to mid-January 2015. The goal was to survey about 50 people per day for 5 of the 7 days during the Hmong New Year.
The researcher trained a group of Hmong college students to assist with the data collection. During Hmong New Year activities, potential participants were approached and asked if they would be willing to participate in the survey that lasted approximately 10 min. They were asked to sign a consent form. They were read the questions, and their responses were noted. The three questions about Hmong speaking, reading, and writing were digitally recorded. At the beginning of the recording, a number for that participant (which was already assigned on the survey) was verbally recorded so the data could be matched.

Following the collection of the quantitative data collected from the surveys, the researcher followed up with the face-to-face interviews. Interviews were scheduled and conducted at each participant’s home or at another location of their choosing to provide for a sense of comfort for the participant. All interviews were digitally recorded, and all recording was transcribed. The researcher also took field notes of her personal reactions to these interviews.

**Language and Cultural Maintenance Protocol**

For the face-to-face interviews, there were two sections. The first set of questions was on language maintenance and the second section focused on cultural maintenance. Each person experienced some similarities and differences with the other interview participants. Their experiences were representative of the average Hmong language and cultural shift in the United States.

**Interview Participants Description**

The eight participants who were selected for the face-to-face interviews were chosen because they fit the criteria for selection. The participants consisted of three females and five males ranging from 18-70 years of age. (See Table 2) Two participants were chosen from each of the three age groups according to their
language proficiency data obtained from the survey in December. The young and single, basic language proficiency group was between the ages of 18-28. The young adult and married, intermediate proficiency group was between the ages of 29-45, and the middle adult and advanced/fluent proficiency group was age 46-older.

The first participant was Vang, and he was in the young and single group and was a Hmong male, who was 21 years of age. He was told by his parents from an early age that he must speak English at school because living in America means you need to know English. On his survey, he indicated that he is from Fresno, California and is single. Both of his parents never attended school, and both parents’ first language was White Hmong. His parents now practiced Poj Koob Yawm Ntxwv, a Hmong traditional practice. He responded that he could speak well in Hmong, but only read “good”, and did not write. The writing system he used was Ntawv Pahawh which was invented by the Mother of Writing, Shong Lue Yang. His parents taught him how to read in Hmong. He did not watch Hmong TV or listen to Hmong radio. He felt that it was very important to know how to speak, read, and write in Hmong and likes being Hmong. He used English quite often, but used Hmong when speaking to his girlfriend’s parents.

The second participant was Xiong, a 26 year old, Hmong, single female residing in Marysville, California. Her family practiced Shamanism. Both her parents never attended school. Her father’s first language was Green/Blue Hmong and her mother’s first language was White Hmong. She indicated that she had a master’s degree. She could speak Hmong well, but that her reading and writing were not good. She felt that it was very important to know how to speak, read, and write in Hmong. She listened to the Hmong radio once in a while and watched Hmong TV weekly. She loved being Hmong and will most likely marry a
Hmong person. When she is married and has her own kids, she would like to raise them the same way that her parents raised her and her siblings.

Interview participant number three was a Hmong female named Yang for this study, who was married and had a child. She was 29 years old and had a master’s degree. She worked as a Registered Dietician where she was able to use Hmong every day at her job. Her parents never attended school. Her husband’s family practiced Shamanism. She could speak, read and write in the Romanized Popular Alphabet. She indicated that she could speak “very well”; however, rated herself as “well” in reading and “good” in writing. She listened to Hmong radio and watched Hmong TV daily. She liked being Hmong and believed that it is very important for her child to be able to speak, read, and write in Hmong and encouraged her child to speak Hmong at home.

The next participant was a Hmong male in his early 40’s. He will be referred to as Lor. His parent’s first language was Green/Blue Hmong. They both have never attended school. He was currently a teacher in Fresno Unified. He indicated that he could speak, read, and write Hmong well. He taught himself how to read and write and listened to the Hmong radio and watched Hmong TV both once in a while. He loved being Hmong and felt that it is very important to know how to speak, read, and write in Hmong. He encouraged his children to speak Hmong at home and felt it is important for them to know their language. He would like for his children to marry a Hmong person.

The fifth interview participant was a Hmong male, age 46, who resided in Merced, California. The fictitious name given to this participant is Moua. He was married and had five children. His parents have never attended school. Both parents’ first language was White Hmong. He was a teacher and indicated that he could speak, read, and write the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet “very well.”
While learning to read and write, he was self-taught and also received some help from friends and relatives. He listened to Hmong radio and watched Hmong TV once in a while. In his opinion, it was very important to know how to speak, read, and write in Hmong, however, he indicated that it was only “somewhat important” for his children to know how to speak, read, and write Hmong, but he did encourage them to use Hmong at home. He loved being Hmong and will highly encourage his children to marry a Hmong person.

The sixth interviewee was named Lee. The researcher interviewed both Lee and her husband. They were in their early 50s and resided in Clovis, California. She started in the 10th grade when she first arrived in the United States in 1982. When her husband arrived in the United States, he started in college. They had six children and some grandchildren. The couple practiced Shamanism and both felt strongly that knowing how to speak, read, and write in Hmong is very important for themselves and for their children. They loved being Hmong and watched Hmong TV and listened to Hmong radio on a daily basis. Both rated themselves in terms of speaking, reading, and writing in the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet as “very well.”

Participant number seven was a single male who was 28 years old. He lived in San Diego, Fresno, and was now residing in Los Angeles where he went to school. He could speak Hmong very well, but did not read or write according to his survey, therefore he fit in the first category. He has served in the U.S. military and will be referred to as Chang.

The eighth participant fit the criteria of the third category where he was fluent in speaking, reading, and writing. He has written five books of which three are dictionaries. The three dictionaries comprise of one Hmong dictionary and the other two are a combination of Hmong-Lao and Hmong-English dictionaries. He
was in his mid-60s and resided in Fresno, California. His children could all speak Hmong, but were not fluent in reading and writing.

**Data Analysis**

This study had two, separate phases of data analysis. The quantitative analyses will be discussed first, followed by the qualitative analysis.

**Quantitative Analysis**

In the quantitative phase, all survey data were coded and inputted into an Excel file which was then imported into SPSS 20.0. The researcher developed a system for rating the speaking, reading, and writing abilities of the participants into Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced/Fluent proficiency level. This rating system referenced the stages of language development as used in the CELDT (CDE, 2013) and was also inputted into the data file. All survey questions were analyzed, and frequencies and percentages of response were reported. Means and standard deviations were calculated and reported for appropriate variables.

To answer the research question, a series of six, 3 X 3 chi-square tests of independence were run. They tested whether or not the responses to the following pairs of variables were independent of one another:

1) Participant’s speaking ability by importance of speaking for oneself
2) Participant’s reading ability by importance of reading for oneself
3) Participant’s writing ability by importance of writing for oneself
4) Participant’s speaking ability by importance of speaking for one’s child
5) Participant’s reading ability by importance of reading for one’s child
6) Participant’s writing ability by importance of writing for one’s child

The 0.5 level of significance was utilized for all statistical tests.
Qualitative Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, interviews, and researcher’s field-note data were transcribed. These data were coded using the constant comparative method. NVivo was used to create and note codes and categorize all data. First, the interview data were coded by language maintenance and cultural maintenance. Next the interview data were coded according to the different age groups and different language abilities. Group trends and emerging themes were reported.

To establish reliability and validity in the qualitative piece of this study, the researcher looked for “confirmability rather than objectivity in establishing the value of the data” (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 204). The researcher used what was called “structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy” so that “multiple types of data to support or contradict the interpretation” could be implemented (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 204). This work was done by looking at all the other data and formulating a “compelling whole” (p. 204). In addition, the researcher used member checking and thick descriptions to ensure validity. When analyzing and reporting the findings from this study, the researcher used ethical validation (the questioning of underlying moral assumptions, political and ethical implications, and equitable treatment of diverse voices) (Creswell et al., 2007).

Finally, since research assistants were used for collecting data, the researcher calculated an inter-rater reliability by picking out 5% of the data from the surveys and, while reading it, had another person listen and code it to determine the percentage of agreement. This was to ensure that the same person, behavior, or situation was assigned the same score or very close to the same score by the raters.

In qualitative research, the researcher was the instrument, and collected data his/herself through observing behavior and interviewing participants.
It is important to understand the frame from which the researcher viewed the world and potential preconceptions resulting from his or her worldview. The researcher’s values and beliefs, background, biases, and assumptions played a significant role in the potential bias that the researcher brought to the study (Mertens, 2005).

**Researcher’s Background and Biases**

In the past 10 years, the researcher has worked extensively with the Hmong community, parents, and students. As the administrator for the Hmong Culture and Literacy Academy at Stone Soup, Fresno, the researcher has first-hand experience of what students and parents have gone through as they attended the 6-week summer program that teaches Hmong students speaking, reading, and writing in Hmong and the Hmong history and culture. As a mother, teacher, and researcher who had to teach her own children how to speak, read, and write, she has developed and holds certain assumptions and biases about the topic of this research.

Qualitative research is said to begin with “assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2007, p. 36). Since qualitative research begins with assumptions, the researcher had some, basic assumptions prior to the research. These assumptions may also be considered as biases that the researcher has:

1) The researcher has a high regard for the Hmong language and culture and wants to preserve it for future generation.

2) Most Hmong children do not have a place in which to learn to speak, read, or write Hmong.
3) Hmong women, who marry outside of the Hmong community, are less likely to teach their children the Hmong language or cultural values.

4) Hmong parents who share their story about life in Laos and their journey to America help to motivate their children to learn about Hmong.

5) Hmong children who are literate in the Hmong language will have a high regard for the Hmong language and culture.

6) Hmong children who are taught Hmong cultural values at an early age will grow up to value and respect the Hmong heritage more than those who are not taught.

7) Hmong students who can speak, read, and write in the Hmong language have a higher self-esteem than their Hmong peers who do not speak, read, and write in the Hmong language.

8) Hmong students who can speak, read, and write in the Hmong language do better in their overall academic achievement in school and in life.

**Limitations**

The limitations to this study were that people may have been reluctant to complete the questions seriously on the survey, their honesty in answering the surveys may have been absent due to the distractions of loud music and being surrounded by thousands of people, or questions may have been left blank since they may have been in a rush to or from the Hmong New Year celebrations.

Another limitation placed on this study was the trained researcher’s assistants. The researcher’s assistants may have been prone to targeting only a certain age group or type of people, and the questions may have been read a little differently from one research assistant to the next. They may also have been distracted by the sounds and events that were going on at the New Year celebration. In addition, the Hmong New Year was held outdoors, and depending
on the weather, it could have limited the number of participants due to bad weather conditions. Finally, the Hmong International New Year usually draws a huge crowd from all over the U.S. and other countries; however, it may or may not have provided a well-represented population of the Hmong community in the U.S. this year.

**Summary**

The Hmong community faces many challenges as the newest immigrant group to the U.S. They want to fit into the mainstream of life by being self-sufficient and productive citizens. To fit in, they must learn the language and culture of the dominant society, which means that they do not practice their own language and culture. Many Hmong students today cannot speak the Hmong language nor can they read and write in that native language. This research used a mixed method of analysis to examine the state of the Hmong language and literacy; to what extent the Hmong language and culture were being lost; and what the community could do to save the language, literacy, and culture for future generation of Hmong students. Survey questions were utilized in this study to obtain data for analysis to capture the current perspectives of the Hmong language, literacy, and cultural values as well as strategies for maintenance.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS/OUTCOMES

This study examined language maintenance and attitudes or perceptions toward the Hmong language and culture. Participants’ current level of speaking, reading, and writing abilities were measured as were their Hmong identity and the importance of the Hmong language for themselves and their children. The result of this study indicated that once the importance of Hmong identity, language maintenance, and culture have been established, there seemed to be a strong relationship between how important a Hmong person felt about the Hmong language in relation to their ability to speak, read, or write in Hmong.

The results of this study were based on a mixed-method, research design gathered through 301 surveys and six face-to-face interviews. Through the usage of both a survey and the face-to-face interviews, this researcher attempted to gain an understanding of the participants’ speaking, reading, and writing abilities and whether or not they thought the ability to speak, read, and write in the Hmong language was of any importance. The findings are discussed in two sections. The first section presents the quantitative, statistical analyses of the survey data obtained over the 4 days at the Hmong International New Year in Fresno, California. The second section discusses the qualitative findings from the eight face-to-face interviews.

Research Questions

The overarching question was: “What are the current skills and perceptions of Hmong speaking, reading, writing among the Hmong people, what are their perceptions of their cultural values, and how does this information pertain to language and cultural maintenance?” Specific research questions were:
1) What is the present level of Hmong speaking, reading, and writing ability and cultural values, and how does this information relate to other demographic information?

2) What are the Hmong community, families, and organizations in the U.S. currently doing to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations of Hmong?

The purpose of this study was to create awareness in the Hmong community so that the Hmong people will take some initiatives to help preserve the Hmong language and culture for future generations. This chapter will present quantitative survey results and qualitative survey and interview results.

**Quantitative Results**

**Survey Participants Description**

The participants were 301 Hmong speaking individuals, ages 18 and older. The survey was conducted over 4 day during the Hmong International New Year in Fresno, California. From December 26, 2014 to December 29, 2014, participants were approached at the Fresno Fairgrounds where the Hmong New Year celebration took place. The 301 participants represented 11 states in the U.S. and one each from Australia and China. The frequencies and percentages of survey participants by date of data collection appear in Table 3.

Gender and marital status are reported in Table 4. The number of males \((n = 143, 47.5\%)\) and females \((n = 153, 50.8\%)\) were nearly equal as were the numbers of participant who reported themselves as being single \((n = 141, 46.8\%)\) and married \((n = 145, 48.2\%)\).

About half \((n = 150, 49.0\%)\) of the participants had children, and 132 \((43.9\%)\) of survey participants did not have any children. Of the participants with
Table 3  

*Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by Day of Data Collection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 26, 2014</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 27, 2014</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 28, 2014</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 29, 2014</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  

*Frequencies and Percentages of Gender and Marital Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender &amp; Marital Status</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
children, the majority \((n = 71, 23.6\%)\) had more than four children; this percentage was followed by people with one child \((n = 29, 9.6\%)\); then people with three children \((n = 25, 8.3\%)\); and finally, people with two children \((n = 16, 5.3\%)\). These figures are represented in Table 5.

Table 5

Frequencies and Percentages of Participants with Children and Number of Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>With Children and Number of Children</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>49.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>43.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline/Missing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>50.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or more</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline/Missing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants’ responses to the question about religion appear in Table 6. Most participants \((n = 177, 58.8\%)\) practiced shamanism, and the second largest group is Christian \((n = 74, 24.6\%)\).

The survey participants came from across the world with the frequencies and percentages of participants reported in Table 7. The vast majority were from the U.S. \((n = 280, 93.02\%)\) and California \((n = 257, 85.4\%)\), but people also came from Australia, China, and 10 other states.
Table 6

*Frequencies and Percentages of Religions Practiced by Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shamanism</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>58.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline to State</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7

*Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by State and Country of Residence*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State or Country</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>93.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>85.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants were asked whether or not they were born in the U.S., and if not born in the U.S., to indicate which country they were born in. Many \((n = 133, 44.2\%)\) were born in the U.S. although most \((n = 168, 55.7\%)\) were not. However, many of those who were born outside the U.S. did not indicate their country of birth. Of those who did indicate a country of birth, 78 (30.8\%) were born in Laos, and 37 (14.6\%) were born in Thailand. Table 8 reflects these figures.

Table 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>30.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thailand</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Representative of the four waves of Hmong refugee immigrants to the U.S., a total of 189 (62.8\%) of the 301 participants in this study were refugees. Most came in the second wave \((n = 70, 37.0\%)\), followed by the third wave \((n = 65, 34.3\%)\), first wave \((n = 38, 20.1\%)\), and the fourth wave \((n = 16, 8.5\%)\). Table 9 shows the frequencies and percentages of the year of arrival to the U.S.

Table 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Arrival</th>
<th>(f)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 presents data on school attendance in the U.S. and the grade participants were first enrolled in a U.S. school. Most of those surveyed \((n = 267, 88.7\%)\) attended school in the U.S. and started in either preschool \((n = 95, 31.6\%)\), or kindergarten \((n = 73, 24.3\%)\).
Table 9

Frequencies and Percentages of Survey Participants by Year of Arrival

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waves (Year)</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (1975-1979)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second (1980-1989)</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>37.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third (1990-1996)</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>34.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth (1997-2005)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>62.8</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10

Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Attending School in the U.S. and the Grade First Enrolled in a U.S. School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attended School &amp; Grade First Enrolled</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attended School in U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>88.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Started in School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Grade</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Grade</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth Grade</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth Grade</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh Grade</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth Grade</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 11 presents data on the highest level of education completed. Approximately half of the participants had completed college \((n = 137, 45.5\%)\), followed by those who had completed high school \((n = 97, 32.2\%)\) and graduate school \((n = 36, 12.0\%)\); some people never attended school \((n = 20, 6.6\%)\).

Table 11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Completed</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never Attended</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult School</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 12, father’s and mother’s first language and their highest educational level achieved are presented. Most fathers spoke White Hmong \((n = 224, 74.7\%)\) followed by Green/Blue Hmong \((n = 69, 22.9\%)\). This pattern is the same for mothers with most \((n = 225, 74.8\%)\) speaking White Hmong followed by Green/Blue Hmong \((n = 68, 22.6\%)\). Most fathers \((n = 165, 54.7\%)\) and even more mothers \((n = 206, 68.4\%)\) never attended school. The percentages of educational attainment generally decreased as the level increased, but the fathers had slightly higher educational attainment.
Table 12

Frequencies and Percentages of Mothers’ and Fathers’ First Language and Highest Level of Education Completed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents’ First Language &amp; Highest Level of Education</th>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green/Blue Hmong</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Hmong</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest Level of Education Completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never Attended</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>54.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate School</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Language Results

Most Hmong who used written language used the Romanized Popular Alphabet (n = 217, 91.2%). Table 13 shows the other forms of Hmong writing systems. Statistics for spoken language are reflected in Table 14. Less than half
of the participants \( n = 116 \), 38.5\% reported using Hmong most often, followed by English \( n = 112 \), 37.2\% and then Green/Blue Hmong \( n = 47 \), 15.6\%.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writing System Names</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Romanized Popular Alphabet (Ntawv Las Tees)</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>72.1</td>
<td>91.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahawh (Ntawv Phaj Hauj)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flower (Ntawv Paj Ntaub)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucky (Ntawv Koob Hmoov)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (Lwm Yam Ntawv)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>37.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Hmong</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>38.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green/Blue Hmong</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the ability to speak, read, and write in Hmong, the data represented in Table 15 show that 292 (97.0\%) could speak Hmong, 220 (73.0\%) could read Hmong, and 183 (60.8\%) could write in Hmong. Of these numbers, only 6 (2.0\%) did not know how to speak Hmong, and only 79 (26.2\%) could not read Hmong. There was a decrease in the language abilities from speaking to reading and from reading to writing.
Participants responded nearly equally that it was very important to speak \((n = 245, 81.4\%)\), read \((n = 245, 81.4\%)\), and write \((n = 243, 80.7\%)\) in Hmong, yet their actual skills in speaking very well \((n = 148, 49.2\%)\), reading very well \((n = 85, 28.2\%)\), and writing very well \((n = 71, 23.6\%)\) did not measure to their abilities. If the Very Well, Well, and Good speaking categories are added together, they include 272 \((90.4\%)\) of the participants. This sum is lower for reading \((n = 215, 71.4\%)\) and even lower for writing \((n = 188, 62.5\%)\). Although a similar and large number of Hmong believed that speaking, reading, and writing was very important, as these skills are harder to attain, fewer Hmong attain them, as is reflected in Table 16.

Around three quarters of the Hmong people felt it was very important \((n = 221, 73.4\%)\) to speak to their children in Hmong. Parents \((n = 235, 78.1\%)\) encouraged their children to speak Hmong. Only six participants \((2.0\%)\) felt it was not important to for their children to speak in Hmong. This information is represented in Table 17.

Table 15

| Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Speaking, Reading, and Writing Abilities |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
|                                 | Speak           | Read            | Write           |
| Responses                      | F   | %    | F   | %    | F   | %    |
| Yes                            | 292 | 97.0 | 220 | 73.1 | 183 | 60.8 |
| No                             | 6   | 2.0  | 79  | 26.2 | 116 | 38.5 |
| Missing                        | 3   | 1.0  | 2   | 0.7  | 2   | 0.7  |
| Total                          | 301 | 100  | 301 | 100  | 301 | 100  |
Table 16

*Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Self-Ratings of Their Abilities and the Importance of Each Skill Set*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fluency</th>
<th>Speak</th>
<th></th>
<th>Read</th>
<th></th>
<th>Write</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Well</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Good</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Speak</th>
<th></th>
<th>Read</th>
<th></th>
<th>Write</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>81.4</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

*Frequencies and Percentages of Participants’ Perceptions of the Importance and Encouragement for Their Children to Speak, Read, and Write in Hmong*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>81.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Important</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>90.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it Important?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 shows that about a third \( (n = 62, 34.4\%) \) of participants used White Hmong when speaking to their children, followed by Other \( (n = 60, 33.3\%) \) which means that the participants uses a combination of two languages when speaking to their children (either White Hmong and English or Green Hmong and English or any combination of two languages); although English \( (n = 41, 22.8\%) \) was also used and so was Green/Blue Hmong \( (n = 17, 9.4\%) \). The data also showed that a little over half of the children used English \( (n = 73, 58.0\%) \) when speaking to their parents, followed by Other \( (n = 47, 27.8\%) \) which again means that the children were using a combination of both English and Hmong or two languages when speaking to their parents, followed by White Hmong \( (n = 40, 23.7\%) \) and Green/Blue Hmong \( (n = 9, 5.3\%) \).

Table 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Children</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Valid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>43.2.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Hmong</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green/Blue Hmong</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>56.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19 reflects data on how participants learned to read and write. Most Hmong participants responded that they were self-taught how to read and write \( (n = 96, 31.9\%) \), or taught through the help of parents \( (n = 65, 21.6\%) \), or friends
or relatives \((n = 30, 10.0\%)\). Community-based programs \((n = 29, 9.6\%)\) and
counties \((n = 18, 6.0\%)\) were next in helping Hmong to learn reading and writing
skills, followed by high schools \((n = 14, 4.7\%)\) and colleges \((n = 13, 4.3\%)\).

Table 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-Taught</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Relatives</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Based Program</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 20 shows the results of participants’ patterns of watching Hmong TV and
listening to Hmong Radio. This information is useful because Hmong hear
and use their language in Hmong TV and Hmong radio stations. Nearly a quarter
of the Hmong participants watched Hmong TV daily \((n = 67, 22.3\%)\); this group
was often the older generation; 124 (41.2\%) watched Hmong TV once in a while,
but 60 (19.9\%) never watched Hmong TV. A similar pattern held true for Hmong
radio with 51 (16.9\%) listening daily, 137 (45.5\%) listening once in a while, and
64 (21.3\%) never listening.
Table 20

Frequencies and Percentages of Participants Hmong TV Viewing and Radio Listening Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hmong TV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>41.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hmong Radio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question Test of Significance

A chi-square test of independence was performed to see if there was a relationship between how participants viewed the importance of speaking, reading, and writing in Hmong to how well they spoke, read, and wrote in Hmong. A separate chi-square was done for speaking, reading, and writing. Overwhelmingly, if participants felt language was important, their speaking ability response ranked “Very Well.” The largest percentage of people who felt that language was somewhat important, ranked in the “Good” category for speaking ability; for those who felt language was not important, the greatest percentage fell into the “Not Good” category. The frequencies and percentages for speaking ability compared to belief of speaking importance appear in Table 21. The chi-square for the speaking data ($\chi^2 (6) = 56.59, p < .001$) was significant.
Table 21

**Chi-Square for Importance of Speaking To Speaking Well**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If participants felt language was very important, their speaking ability was ranked “Very Well” (138, 48.1%); for those who felt language was somewhat important, their speaking ability was ranked “Highest at Good” (18, 6.3%); most people who felt language was not important fell into the “Not Good” category (2, 0.7%) for their speaking ability.

The frequencies and percentages for reading ability compared to belief of reading importance appear in Table 22. The chi-square for the reading data ($X^2$ (6) = 41.87, $p < .001$) is significant. Again, the vast majority ($n = 233, 81.5\%$) felt it was very important to read Hmong well, and 212 (74.1%) read Hmong very well, well, or good. Very few people ($n = 6, 1.7\%$) believed it was not important to read Hmong. There were (82, 28.7%) participants who felt that reading in Hmong was very important, and they rated themselves as reading “Very Well”; fewer (23, 8.0%) participants rated reading ability as somewhat important and rated themselves as reading “Good,” and only 5 (1.7%) participants did not feel that reading was important, and their reading ability was rated “Not Good.”

The frequencies and percentages for writing ability compared to belief of writing importance appear in Table 23. The chi-square for the writing data ($X^2$ (6) = 37.44, $p < .001$) was significant. The vast majority ($n = 227, 81.1\%$) felt it was very important to know how to write Hmong, and 165 (59.0%) wrote Hmong very
The frequencies and percentages of participants’ belief in the importance of their children’s speaking, reading, and writing abilities in Hmong appear in Table
24. The chi-square for the importance of all three by speaking data ($\chi^2 (6) = 80.35$, $p < .001$) was significant. The vast majority ($n = 220, 73.8\%$) felt it was very important for their children to know how to speak Hmong, and very few people ($n = 28, 9.4\%$) believed it was not important for their children to speak Hmong. The importance here also decreased by skill level. Participants ($n = 201, 67.4\%$) rated speaking as very important and spoke the language very well. Only 20 participants (6.7\%) felt that it was somewhat important and could speak it well whereas four participants (1.7\%) did not feel that speaking was important and could only speak “Good” or “Not Good.”

Table 24

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 25, a similar pattern appears when comparing participants’ reading abilities and their belief in the importance of their children’s abilities to speak, read, and write in Hmong. The chi-square for the reading data ($\chi^2 (6) = 80.35$, $p < .001$) was significant. The majority ($n = 220, 73.8\%$) felt it was very important for their children to know how to speak, read, and write Hmong, and few people ($n = 28, 9.4\%$) believed it was not important for their children to read, speak, and write Hmong. Again, a pattern existed here where there is a relationship between participants’ reading ability and their belief in the importance
of their children’s abilities to speak, read, and write Hmong. A total of 201 (67.4%) participants who rated their own reading ability as “Very Well” felt that it was very important for their children to speak, read, and write Hmong. Reading ability also decreased with a lower belief in the importance of Hmong language skills for children.

Table 25

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chi-square for the writing data \( \chi^2 (6) = 82.28, p < .001 \) was significant and appears in Table 26. The majority of participants \( n = 220, 73.8\% \) felt that it was very important for their children to know how to speak, read, and write Hmong, and few people \( n = 28, 9.4\% \) believed it was not important for their children to read, speak, and write Hmong. Again, writing ability also decreased with a lower belief in the importance of language skills for children.
Table 26

Chi-Square of Participants’ Hmong Writing Ability to Importance of Participants’ Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ability</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
<th>Well</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not Good</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>73.8</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 27, the chi-square for the correlation between the belief in the importance of speaking, reading, and writing Hmong and the encouragement of children to speak Hmong ($\chi^2 (6) = 82.28, p < .001$) was significant. The majority ($n = 235, 97.1\%$) of participants encouraged their children to speak Hmong, and very few people ($n = 7, 2.9\%$) did not encourage their children to speak Hmong. Furthermore, 191 (78.9\%) believed it was very important for their children to be able to speak, read, and write in Hmong, and very few ($n = 3, 1.2\%$) of participants thought that it was very important yet did not encourage their children to speak Hmong.

Table 27

Chi-Square of Participants’ Encouragement of Children to Speak Hmong to Importance of Children Speaking, Reading, and Writing Hmong

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of Importance</th>
<th>Very Well</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Not Well</th>
<th>Miss</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>188</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>78.9</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cultural Results

The overwhelming majority of respondents loved or liked being Hmong \((n = 292, 97.0\%)\). Only one \((0.3\%)\) person did not want to be Hmong. These data can be found in Table 28.

Table 28

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmong Identity</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Love being Hmong</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>76.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like being Hmong</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embarrassed being Hmong</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t want to be Hmong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline/Missing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 29 represents the frequencies and percentages of participants’ marriage preferences for their children. The majority of the respondents \((n = 187, 62.1\%)\) wanted their children or highly encouraged them to marry within the Hmong followed by those who were Undecided \((n = 81, 26.9\%)\) about marriage preferences for their children. Very few were least likely \((n = 4, 1.3\%)\) or discouraged \((n = 2, 0.7\%)\) their children from marrying Hmong.

Table 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage Preferences</th>
<th>f</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Must marry Hmong</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly encourage</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Least likely</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discourage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decline/Missing</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualitative Results

This section reports the findings from the three qualitative questions in the survey and the eight face-to-face interviews. The survey had three questions that measured the skill abilities of the participants in speaking, reading, and writing. The interviews, on the other hand, examined the perceptions held by the participants regarding language and cultural maintenance. The results gathered contained three themes which are cultural pride, language maintenance and loss, and generational differences. The second theme of language maintenance and loss has two subthemes: the role of schools and organizations in language maintenance and cultural maintenance and loss. The third theme of generational differences also has two subthemes: Hmong morals and values and American values. The results below are categorized according to the themes in which they fall under.

Theme 1: Cultural Pride

On the survey, the participants were asked to speak in Hmong and tell one thing about the Hmong culture that makes them proud to be Hmong. There were only a few people who named only one thing that made them proud. The vast majority of the participants named more than one thing that made them proud, and three of those surveyed said they liked everything about Hmong. When prompted with, “What makes you proud to be Hmong?” one participant stated,

Cov lus koj hais ntawd teb nyuab kawg vim hais tias peb Hmoob muaj ntau yam es uas yus ntshaw ua Hmoob los yog uas yus proud uas yus yog Hmoob. Qhov kuv xav hais tias kuv nyiam ua Hmoob, I think, I just like being Hmong--everything about Hmong. Tas puas tsav yam txog Hmoob es yog Hmoob, haiv neeg, los yog Hmoob teej tug, los yog Hmoob keeb kwm. Kuv yeej nyiam txhua yam. Tsis muaj ib yam es kuv tsis nyiam. It’s hard so I can’t choose one.

(English Translation)

The question asked here is very difficult to answer because we [the Hmong people] have so many things that make us desire to be Hmong and proud to
be Hmong. I think I just like being Hmong. Everything about Hmong, that is Hmong—the people, the culture and tradition, or Hmong heritage/history. I like all of them. There is nothing that I do not like. It’s hard so I can’t choose one.

Another participant responded,

Kuv zoo siab tias kuv yog ib tug Hmoob rau qhov hais tias txhua txhua yam Hmoob ua yeej yog qhov kuv nyiam thiab kuv zoo siab hais tias nej cov hluas tseem muaj cov txaus siab yuav los kawm txog Hmoob ntxim thiab. Qhov no yog ib qho uas yuav ua rau peb cov Hmoob txoj kab li kev cai thiab peb lub npe Hmoob tsis ploj ib zaug.

(English Translation)

I am proud that I am Hmong because I like everything that the Hmong people do; and I am very proud that this younger generation has a desire to learn more about the Hmong. This is something that will help our Hmong culture and traditions, and our Hmong name will never disappear.

The third person who liked everything there is about Hmong stated,

Kuv nyiam Hmoob txhua yam kab li kev cai, yam uas Hmoob tsim muaj, thiab yam ua cov tub txawj ntxhais ntse tom ntej no lawv nrhiav tau rau Hmoob. Txhua yam li nawb. Zoo siab heev li tias yog Hmoob.

(English Translation)

I like everything about the Hmong’s culture and tradition—things that the Hmong created themselves, and all the things that the Hmong scholars will come up with for the Hmong. Everything—I am very happy that I am Hmong.

Survey participants were proud to be Hmong for many different reasons. The top reasons for having pride in being Hmong were Hmong traditions with 53 (17.6%) comments; love, support, and respect within the Hmong family and community which was mentioned 48 (15.9%) times; followed by Hmong culture (n=35, 11.6%); one unique people (n=33, 11%); language (n=30, 10.0%), parents (n=18, 6%); and history (n=15, 5.0%). The remaining reasons why the survey participants were proud are the Hmong people’s sense of adaptability to the different cultures and accomplishments (n=16, 5.3%), wisdom/talents/knowledge (n=10, 3.3%), and generosity and hospitality (n=8, 2.7%). The rest said that they
are proud to be Hmong because of Hmong food \( (n=8, 2.7\%) \); stories, songs, instruments, and arts \( (n=7, 2.3\%) \); living in America \( (n=3, 1.0\%) \); Hmong girls \( (n=2, 0.7\%) \); and one participant mentioned that he is proud to be Hmong because Hmong do not base life on material needs.

In this first theme, participants shared that they were very happy to see the Hmong language in print in various locations and from different agencies within the community. This gave them a sense of pride knowing that their language is somehow slowly becoming visible to their people which may then become visible to the mainstream community. There was a sense of hope from the Hmong community when it came to maintaining the Hmong language and culture since they are seeing the Hmong language in print.

Other evidence of pride was gathered in the survey data. The majority of the participants loved being Hmong with only one person who did not like being Hmong. Some of these patterns exactly paralleled the findings in McGinn’s (1989) work. Participants repeatedly stated in their survey and the qualitative questionnaire that they were proud to be Hmong for various reasons. They have mentioned the Hmong tradition, Hmong clothes, language, culture, and having a unique history, family structure, and other important factors as the reasons for their strong Hmong affinity.

Two participants, who were in the middle proficiency group, said that they were always Hmong no matter what. One did feel more comfortable and at ease with other Hmong because he knew that they understood each other and knew what they had all gone through as a Hmong person. The other said that he is more Hmong than American at all times. Here are examples of what they had to say, Lor said,
I think I am always Hmong even when I am with other non-Hmong. I am most Hmong when I am with Hmong though. I feel more comfortable with my own kind because they understand what we’ve gone through. When I am with others, I am mostly quiet. It’s who I am.

Moua replied,

I always consider myself as Hmong. I am physically and linguistically Hmong. The house and social setting tells me I am Hmong. Maintaining some aspect of the Hmong language and culture makes me more Hmong than American.

Participants stated that being born a Hmong person makes them Hmong. Four of the six always identified themselves as Hmong first in almost every situation. When in the Hmong community and during cultural celebrations and rituals, many of the participants echoed that they are 100% Hmong.

Another reason the Hmong people had a little bit more pride in their language is the fact that the language has gained some visibility in the community. There was mention of one particular billboard sign that had a Hmong singer on it for an ad with M150, which is an energy drink, and another billboard of an advertisement for rice. One participant saw the words, “Nyob Zoo” at Chukchansi Resort and Casino, and another participant saw the Hmong writing at a canal stating “danger” or “ceev faj.” The only other places that the participants saw Hmong in print are in ads at the Hmong stores, restaurants, and on Hmong TV. One person stated that she saw a parent handbook about the Common Core Standards translated into Hmong. All the participants mentioned that letters from the local school districts have been coming home in Hmong and that while attending funerals and weddings, those programs are all written in Hmong. Hospitals and some companies or local offices did have some signs in Hmong. Also, the local health and human services department in Fresno, Merced, and Marysville where three of the participants live, were known to have memos and letters in Hmong. One participant shared that he has seen Hmong in print at the...
Department of Motor Vehicles. However, one participant now living in Los Angeles, had not seen any Hmong in print nor has he seen any Hmong person at his college. This is what the different participants said about seeing Hmong in print in their city:

Lor commented,

I see Hmong in print mostly at Asian Village and some other Asian stores. One time I saw Hmong on the entrance sign at Chukchansi Casino. I was surprised to see that. It was misspelled. I was going to go tell them to correct it, but they go shut down. Sometimes schools have Hmong labels by their bathroom and Hmong letters come home from the school.

Xiong said,

I see Hmong writing in schools, county health and human services department, and a booklet about common core standards, hospitals, mental clinics, and Hmong stores.

Lee replied,

Ntawv Hmoob no mas kuv pom thaj zaug ntawm ib tug canal kom “ceev faj”, mas kuv zoo siab kawg li. Kuv pom tias muaj ntawv Hmoob txhais tom tsev kwm ntawv los, tom chaw kho mob thiaj tom tim tej tsev kaj siab ua rau kuv ras tias peb cov ntawv Hmoob kuj tseem ceeb zog tuaj lawm.

(English Translation)

About the Hmong written language, I saw it for the first time on the canal to warn of “danger”, and I was very happy to see that. I have seen that there are Hmong letters that come home from the schools, hospitals and from mental clinics. This made me realize that the Hmong language is gaining in importance.

Many participants were proud to associate themselves as Hmong in the following ways. Living with parents, speaking Hmong, eating Hmong food and participating in Hmong rituals and cultural celebrations were reasons participants define themselves as Hmong. The ability to understand the Hmong language, culture, and history were also reasons stated for making participants Hmong. One
participant stated that the Hmong clothes and the rituals for weddings and funerals are what make her Hmong. In the participants’ own words,

Moua said,

Being able to speak, read, and write Hmong. Eating Hmong food and attending the cultural rituals and ceremonies say that I’m Hmong.

Chang stated,

It’s not a choice. It’s what I was born into. It’s part of my born identity and I can’t get rid of it even if I wanted to. Socially and psychologically, I’m Hmong.

Vang asserted,

I think the fact that I grew up with the Hmong culture, I understand the language, culture, and history and that makes me Hmong.

Lor replied,

I think living with my mom makes me Hmong. Not many other cultures do that. Eating Hmong food and participating in Hmong cultural celebrations makes me Hmong. I teach Hmong and English at school. That makes me Hmong.

Vang responded,

That’s a very hard question. Honestly, I’d be proud to just tell them that I’m Hmong. I can still speak and understand the elders and I still have some cultural habit that say I’m Hmong.

Lee answered,


(English Translation)

The language I use daily, the clothes, the cultural practices from ritual practices of shaman, funerals, and weddings. Our house, the plants we have, and the way we clean our house. The boiled pork with greens and the steam rice tell me that I am Hmong.

Lee said,
Yus cov tsoos tsho thiab yus cov lus, dab neeg, kab lis kev cai, thiab tshoob kos qhia tau hais tias yus yog Hmoob.

(English Translation)
Our clothes and our language, our stories, cultural practices and weddings signify that we are Hmong.

Lee’s husband said,

Peb cov txiv neej coj kev cai qub mas thaum peb tawm plaws sab nrauv mas peb yeej zoo li Hmoob Mes Kas. Thaum vas xaum vas thiv no ces yuav tau mus koom tej kwv tij, tshoob kos, ntees tuag. Thaum ntawd mas yus tsis nco qab yog hmoob Mes Kas. Yus yeej yog Hmoob 100%.

(English Translation)
Us Hmong men, when we are out in the mainstream community, we are Hmong Americans. When we are in the Hmong community on the weekends, we don’t remember that we are Hmong Americans. We are 100% Hmong.

Theme 2: Language Maintenance and Language Loss

In the next theme, details from the interview helped to shed light on how much the Hmong language has shifted over the 40 years of living in the United States and what has been maintained. Language maintenance and language loss is our second theme.

One item from the survey asked participants to read a sentence written in Hmong: *Peb tsev neeg nyiam mus ua si nram ntug dej hiav txwv txhua xyoo thauム lub 4 hlis ntuj*. Participants were asked to read the sentences to their best ability and were recorded on the digital recorder. Fifty-two of the participants could not read, therefore, declined to be recorded. Fluent readers of the sentence accounted for 140 (46.5%) participants and 102 (33.8 %) of the participants were not fluent readers as evaluated by the researcher. The researcher used three people who are fluent speakers, readers, and writers to help evaluate the oral readings of
the recordings. The interrater reliability was at 86%. The two external raters and the researcher agreed 86% of the time on the items they listened to.

The last qualitative question on the survey asked the participants to translate two English sentences by writing them into Hmong. The sentences were: *My dad is sixty years old. He was a Hmong soldier during the Vietnam War.* The researcher also calculated interrater reliability on the translations. The ratings for the writing were coded, non-writers (0), basic (1), proficient (2), and advanced (3). The interrater reliability on the translation was 75% agreement between two raters and the researcher. There were 94 (31%) participants who could not write Hmong, 50 (17%) basic writers, 97 (32%) proficient, and 60 (20%) advanced writers. The non-writers declined to write and stated that they couldn’t write in Hmong. The basic writers knew some words in Hmong and may have written one of the sentences correctly. The proficient writers translated both sentences with a couple of English terms or had minor spelling errors, but overall, the translation was mostly correct. In the advanced category, the writers were able to translate both sentences correctly using a variety of complex vocabulary words not normally heard in every day conversations.

Examples of the different levels of written fluency:

Basic:

Kuv txiv muaj 60 xyoo. Nwm yog ib tub t. . . Hmoob tu. . . lub. . . Secret War.

Proficient:

Kuv txiv muaj 60 xyoo. Nws yog Hmoob it dug tub nrog thaum lub sib hawm nyab laj rov nrog.

Advanced:
Kuv txiv muaj hnub nyoog 60 xyoo. Nws yog ib tug tub peeb zeej rau thaum nplua rog nyab laj.

From the data, there is evidence that the Hmong language is changing and shifting. All the interview participants mentioned over and over that by living with their parents or in-laws, they were able to maintain their language because it was needed to communicate with them. Although the majority of the Hmong parents stated that it is of great importance for their children to speak, read, and write in Hmong, and that they highly encourage their children to speak Hmong, more and more Hmong students prefer to use English over Hmong. The parents admitted that because of the environment they lived in today, and due to their fast paced lifestyle, they too, sometimes found themselves speaking to their children in English rather than in Hmong. This was due to the ease of usage of the English language and the better comprehension rate for their children. All the participants who had children agreed that their children’s Hmong is different from their Hmong and will continue to change over time, unless there are preventive efforts to help teach the Hmong language and cultural beliefs from an early age, especially if it can be taught through schools.

All but one of the participants lived in cities where there was a decent population of Hmong people. This means that the Hmong language was being heard, spoken, and seen. There were social and cultural interactions going on within these cities. Participants also shared that there was more visibility of the Hmong written language in the hospitals, health and human services departments, schools, and in and around town on billboards, or signs at the local Hmong grocery stores. Some participants translated this increasing use of the Hmong language as a sign that the Hmong language is gaining in importance in the community. They were hopeful that this will spark some interest from the Hmong
students to want to learn and maintain the Hmong language in the future. However, there were participants who did not live near other Hmong people such as the one participant who was going to school and living in Los Angeles. He did not have much contact with the Hmong community and did not see or hear Hmong unless he came home or got visits from his mom and family.

Many Hmong participants became literate in the Hmong language through learning it on their own and some received help from parents, friends, or relatives. Still others learned through community organizations such as churches or a high school or college. Having the parents, in-laws, or elders in the home was a recurring theme that helped the participants maintained their Hmong. Another theme that came up in this research is the importance of speaking, reading, and writing in Hmong and how that is the key to preserving the language and culture. Parents also believed strongly that schools should be responsible for teaching the Hmong language as a foreign language from an early age to prevent children from further loss of the language and in order to preserve the Hmong language.

Their biggest hope for preserving the Hmong language and culture rested in the hands and work of the Hmong scholars. The participants shared that the work of preserving the Hmong language and culture would be the responsibility of the Hmong scholars and encouraged the researcher to write down Hmong stories, cultural beliefs, and songs, poems, rituals, and publish those books so that they can be a resource for those who have lost the language and culture to go back and relearn it.

One participant commented that her parents used both Hmong and Lao because they lived in Laos, and when they became refugees in Thailand, her parents learned Thai as well. She went on to share that because she was the first generation to grow up in America; she too had picked up English terms and used
both Hmong and English when speaking to her children. Other participants stated that their Hmong was different from their parents in terms of word choice and the depth of use of certain vocabulary words. They commented that the older generation used more metaphors, idioms, and analogies when speaking, whereas the younger generation was more direct when it came to speaking. Vang said, “We are expected to know English here in America; therefore, we have somehow lost our language.”

Lor asserted,

Their vocabulary is much bigger than mine. They use lots of metaphor and when they speak, they are not direct so you have to listen carefully and try hard to decipher what they are really trying to communicate.

Moua responded,

The way I speak to my parents may have some reductions in vocabulary because the experience is different.

Lor said,

Cov miv nyuag mas puab has lug txawv peb heev lawm puab has lug txhaav txhaav. Peb tseem has “complete sentences.” Puab tsuas paub “yes” hab “no” xwb. Puab yeej has tsis tau lus Moob. Yus has lug Moob rua puab tes puab tseem has lug As Kis teb yus xwb.

(English Translation)

The kids really speak different from us. It is very hard for them to speak. We can still speak in complete sentences. They only know “yes” and “no.” They cannot speak Hmong. We can speak Hmong to them, but they will reply in English only.

The participants reasoned that the Hmong language they speak today is able to stay the same because they live with their parents or parents-in-law and have to use it on a daily basis. Also, being involved in cultural celebrations such as weddings, funerals, social gatherings, and New Year celebrations helped these individuals to maintain their language skills. Another reason the language has been able to stay the same is because of the number of speakers in and around the
city where these participants live and the use of the language on Hmong TV, radios and some Hmong magazines. In the words of the participants:

Moua stated,

I think being with the more elderly and gatherings at funerals. The elders haven’t transfer over to English. Without that, the Hmong’s association with the English speakers would mean that they would switch over to English completely. The environment, social setting we have in the community has helped me to maintain my Hmong even after 30+ years in America.

Vang asserted,

I really enjoyed watching the Hmong movies and Chinese movies that were dubbed. I grew up speaking in Hmong so that has helped me to keep the Hmong language.

Lee replied,

Kuv niam tais thiab niam pog nkawv yeej paub lus Hmoob xwb. Vim niam pog nrog wb nyob ces yus yeej tau siv lus Hmoob xwb. Tsis tas li xwb los cov lus Hmoob yeej yog yus hom lus thib ib ces yus yeej nyiam hais nws tshaj.

(English Translation)

My mother and my mother-in-law both speak only Hmong. Since my mother-in-law lives with us, I have to use Hmong only. Not only that, but the Hmong language is my first language so I love speaking it the best.

Lor responded,

Vim kuv nrug kuv nam nyob tes kuv yuav tsum has lus Moob xwb.

(English Translation)

Because I live with my mom then I have to speak only Hmong.

The majority of the participants stated that they had elderly parents in the home; therefore, they must use Hmong every day. As of result of having elders in the home, they were able to maintain their primary language. Two of the participants had to use Hmong on their job on a daily basis while six participants said that by attending cultural celebrations in the community on a regular basis had helped them to maintain their ability to speak Hmong. One participant tried to
speak only Hmong at home and another participant read Hmong stories to his youngest child to ensure that the Hmong language was being maintained at home. Three of the participants listened to the Hmong radio and watched Hmong TV every day. The last participant used Hmong when he spoke to his girlfriend’s parents. These were ways in which the participants had been able to maintain their Hmong. In Lee’s husband’s words,

Vim peb muaj cov laus, peb tseem nrog cov laus tham. Lus Hmoob yog yam lus kuv xeev xwm los thiab hais tau zoo tshaj plaws. Hmoob muaj noj muaj haus, kab ploj kev tuag no ces lawv siv cov lus tseem thiab muaj ntsiab lus heev uas los ntawm kab li kev cai los. Tsis ntev no muaj Hmoob TV thiab xov tooj cua ua rau zoo li Hmoob cov lus muaj nuj nqis tuaj lawm.

(English Translation)

Due to the fact that we have the elderly, we have to talk to them. The Hmong language was the language I was born into and I speak it very well. Hmong have social gatherings and cultural gatherings where they use the really rich language with deep meanings. Not too long ago, there has been the Hmong TV and radio which adds some prestige to the Hmong language.

Lor replied,

My mom lives with me so I must speak only Hmong so I have to keep my Hmong in order to talk to her. I have to speak so that my kids will hear it. Sometimes I have to remind myself. As for my children, I encourage them to speak Hmong, but I’ve not been successful. It is very hard. Our line of work and our lifestyle doesn’t support our wishes.

Having to participate in cultural activities during celebrations, or funerals and weddings has also helped some participants to maintain the Hmong language. Surrounding oneself with elders who speak the rich language helped many of the participants to develop and maintain the language. Having taken classes at the high school, college, and church has also been the factors that helped participants to keep the Hmong language. Also, summer programs in certain counties have been able to help some participants to be able to be fluent in Hmong. Back in
Thailand, there were Hmong literacy classes in the refugee camp which helped two of the participants learn how to read and write in Hmong.

Yang stated,

Growing up in my family, I spoke only Hmong. This has helped me to learn and maintain my language. Also, taking courses at Fresno State has also helped me.

Vang asserted,

Being Hmong and having lived with my parents. Also, having a Hmong girlfriend and having to speak to her parents in Hmong. When I go over, I need to be able to know how to communicate to them.

Xiong commented,

Being raised in the Hmong family by my traditional parents helped me to learn Hmong and maintain my Hmong language. A one-time summer program that was funded by the Hmong New Year committee to teach Hmong classes to Hmong students over 10 years ago benefitted me.

Lee said,


(English Translation)

Living with my mother and father and practicing the cultural rituals help to support the Hmong language and the maintaining of the language. Being born a Hmong helps. Living in Vinai (a refugee camp in Thailand) I went to learn to read and write Hmong.

Lor said,

The most important thing is my mom and me being a teacher. I have to be able to speak in Hmong so that I can communicate with my mom, students and parents. My mom lives with me and I have to use Hmong to communicate with and to her daily. We have a lot of elders too. It is very powerful and important to be able to speak Hmong.

Another participant stated that she spoke Hmong as much as she could and that her family spoke Hmong most of the time. She would ask her siblings and
parents to talk to her daughter in Hmong so that she could continue to learn and speak Hmong. She also used Hmong every day at work which made it easier for her to maintain her Hmong language skills than those who did not get the opportunity to use the language at work.

To ensure that their children do not forget to speak in Hmong, the participants would only speak Hmong at home and highly encouraged the speaking of Hmong at home. Reading to their children in Hmong as much as possible and buying children’s movies that have been dubbed in Hmong were two strategies that parents had used. Many of the participants loved to see Hmong charter schools or Boys and Girls Clubs that had a special component in Hmong arts, crafts, and language and cultural activities. One participant shared that because his two older children spoke very little Hmong, he would have to try harder with his two younger children to see if there is any hope for them. Lor shared,

With my two older kids, I think it’s just a little too late; even with my 8 year old, I think it’s already late since she already only knows English. Looking at my little boy, I feel so sorry for him because he’s clueless, and through no fault of his own, he might grow up not knowing his own language. I think I need to expose my children to more Hmong cultural events and celebrations or Hmong programs.

One participant stated she would raise her children the same way her parents have raised her. She said, “In the future, I would speak Hmong to my kids, read to them in Hmong, raise them the same way that my parents raised me so that they will know the Hmong language and culture.”

Five of the participants heard the Hmong language and saw Hmong people whenever they went shopping at the local Asian stores or attended funerals, weddings, and cultural celebrations or family gatherings in their town. These participants lived in cities where there were a good number of Hmong people
living there. They said that as a result of living near many Hmong speaking
people, it was easy for them to see Hmong and hear the Hmong language spoken
regularly as compared to the one participant who just moved to Los Angeles.

**The role of schools and organizations on language maintenance.**

Participants had many ideas on how the city, schools, and community based
organizations can make efforts to sustain the Hmong language. Three of the
participants stated that Hmong scholars or writers should record everything about
the Hmong people’s culture, life, and history. This was what Lee said,

>Peb cov laus tsis muaj kev kawm txawj kawm ntse ces peb yuav tiv thaiv
tsis tau. Qhov yuav tiv thaiv tau mas yog nej cov tub txawj ntxhais ntse,
nej yuav tau muab peb cov ntaub ntawv txhua yam sau teev cia kom peb
txawm plam deb lawm los peb rov mus tshawb tau cov ntaub ntawv no kawm.

*(English Translation)*

We, the older generation did not have the opportunity to get an education,
therefore, we cannot prevent this [referring to the language and culture
from being lost]. What can protect or prevent this problem is for you
scholars to write things down using our written language and store this
knowledge away so that if we do go away from our language and culture,
we still have a way to relearn it.

Participants wanted scholars to start publishing children’s books in Hmong
so that parents could purchase them for their children to read. One participant
stated that local Hmong organizations should create opportunities for Hmong
literacy and culture to be taught to Hmong families and children on a regular basis.

Here is what

Moua said,

>Organizations should provide cultural activities and expose younger
Hmong to use the language and activities to incorporate Hmong speaking,
provide opportunities for children to use Hmong and do Hmong stuff.

Community based organizations should find funding to get younger
students to be involved with older generations to create a convergence
between the different age groups and share oral stories, and ways to pass on trades and tools.

Yang stated,

Schools should offer classes in Hmong as a foreign language. I wanted to take Hmong classes in middle school, but I didn’t have the opportunity. Hmong language and culture should be offered to all students, not just the Hmong students.

One participant wanted to see if the city, community-based organizations, and school districts can help with opening a charter school. She stated, “We’ve heard a lot about the Hmong charter schools in Minnesota. I wished that there was one here in Fresno.” Another participant wanted the city to help open a Boys’ and Girls’ club that would incorporate Hmong arts and crafts and literacy for all the children that come to that club.

Another participant wanted the city, schools, and community based organizations to work together to coordinate cultural activities to stimulate children’s interest in the Hmong culture from an early age. By providing opportunities for Hmong children to use Hmong and learn about Hmong culture and language, children can begin to establish a healthy identity. One participant shared that the reasons why many community-based organizations may not be able to help with the Hmong language maintenance is because their funding did not allow for cultural and literacy projects. However, she felt that these organizations could open their doors on the weekends to allow for some literacy and cultural classes for the Hmong children as a start. Lee responded,

Tej zaum lawv tau nyiaj rau qhov lawv thov xwb ces lawv thiaj li pab tsis tau Hmoob. Yog lawv muab lawv tej hoob kas ntawd pub rau Hmoob qhia ntawv thiab kab li kev cai rau cov me nyuam thaum lub weekend, qhov no yog thawj kauj ruam yuav pib.

(English Translation)

Maybe it’s because they were only funded for what they have asked for, therefore, cannot help the Hmong. If they open up their facility free of
Participants wanted schools to hold more Hmong language courses, and teachers need to be trained to teach engaging Hmong lessons so that other students will want to learn about the Hmong language and culture. Field trips to the Hmong New Year could be a requirement for these classes, and students need to be encouraged to do research on the Hmong language and culture. All six of the participants felt that the school is the best place for Hmong to be taught. Students nowadays will listen to teachers more than they do their parents, and when these requirements come from the school, the children are more willing to listen. Lee commented,

Yuav tsum yog cov tsev kawm ntawv qhia ntawv Hmoob mas cov me nyuam thiaj li yuav xav kawm. Peb cov me nyuam saib tau hais tias ntawv Hmoob twb tsis muaj nqis tom tsev kawm ntawv ua rau lawv tsis muaj siab kawm.

(English Translation)

It should be the role of the schools to teach the Hmong language in order for the students to want to learn it. Our children see that the Hmong language is not important at school; therefore, they don’t have the motivation to learn it.

Three of the participants felt that schools should start teaching primary language instruction to children at a young age because they feel that the older the children get, the more resistant they are to adopting to new languages or culture. Lee’s husband said,

Yog kom peb cov lus Hmoob no muaj chaw mus mas peb yuav tsum muaj cov class pib thaum me nyuam me me tuaj. Thaum lawv loj lawm lawv tsis xav kawm. Yog cov class no muaj chaw kawm thiab kawm tau credit ces cov neeg thiaj li xav kawm. Yuav tsum muab cov lus Hmoob no caius ua conversation language thiab academic language es qhia rau cov me nyuam kawm ntawv kom lawv thiab thiaj paub.

(English Translation)
If our Hmong language is to have a future, we must have classes when the children are still very young to begin with. When they are older, they don’t want to learn. If there are places to hold classes and people get credit for taking the classes, people will want to take them. The Hmong language must be separated into conversational language and academic and be taught to the students so that they will know.

Many times, students want to fit in, and if there was not a place at school for children to practice their own language and still fit in to the school culture, it is more likely that students will not want to take it. As stated by Vang, “Everything here in America is about fitting in, and if you can’t fit in, you are a nobody.”

**Cultural maintenance and loss.** The five participants who still practiced Hmong cultural traditions and rituals said that they were able to keep their culture as a result of practicing or participating in the cultural rituals. They stated that the rituals help remind them of who they are, and every rule of life is found in the verses of the songs and chants sung at these cultural celebrations. One participant described these rituals as an oral “Hmong Bible.” She said that if anyone wants to learn about the Hmong culture, tradition, and history, to seek out the Hmong funerals and weddings rituals and songs.

One of the participants was younger, yet she continued to practice the Hmong cultural traditions of Shamanism because she married into a family where her mother-in-law was a Shaman woman. Yang and her husband, his siblings, and her father-in-law all had a role to carry out when her mother-in-law did this cultural ritual. She had a daughter and hopes to pass the culture to her.

Two of the participants who also practiced Shamanism were also younger, yet they kept their culture because of their mothers. They respected their parents very much, and if practicing the cultural rituals were going to make their parents happy, then they were going to do just that.
In the participant’s words about living a Hmong life and maintaining the Hmong culture, Lee and her husband said,

Wb yeej nyob lub neej Hmoob ntau tab sis txuam nrog mes kas vim cov me nyuam. Tseem ua neeb ua yaig, ua xwm kab, ces tseem nyob noj li Hmoob, tsuas yog ua laj kam xwb thiab li ua li Mes Kas. Wb yeej coj kev cai hmoob ces wb yeej khaws tau Hmoob kab li kev cai. Peb lus neej Hmoob yeej nyob tas rau hauv no. Wb tseem ua neeb, ua xwb kab, ib xyoos pauj yeem ib zaug. Niaj hnub mus kawm thiab khaws kab li kev cai Hmoob vim Hmoob culture nyob tas hauv lawm. Cov lus Hmoob tob tob ces yeej nyob tas hauv lawm.

(English Translation)

We live mostly a Hmong lifestyle, with a little bit of American style because of our kids. We still practice Shamanism so we still live and eat like Hmong, except for how we earn a living is more like American. We practice Hmong rituals so we are able to maintain our cultural practices. We have a Shaman to perform a ritual for us each year as well as a sacrificial ritual of an animal. We are learning about the Hmong cultural practices in order to maintain it since all the Hmong beliefs and ways of life are all in the cultural rituals. Extensive rich Hmong words and language are embedded in the cultural context of the rituals.

Vue responded,

Yuav ua neej Hmoob li ntuj qub qab los tsis tau, ho yuav nyob noj li Mes Kas xwb los tsis tau. Tab sis sib yoog kom tej me nyuam lawv txhob nyuaj siab. Tus ho ua hauj lwm lig, es tau pw me me xwb los cia nws pw lig zog. Tus ho tub nkeeg heev los yuav tau qhia thiab tsa kom ho nquag.

(English Translation)

To live just like Hmong back in the old country is not possible. And to live just like Americans is not feasible. However, we have to adjust so that the children will not be distressed. The child who works late and only gets a few hours of sleep will be allowed to wake up later. The child that is somewhat lazy will be taught not to be so lazy.

Only one of the participants was a Christian, yet he still attended traditional cultural celebrations and felt that although he did not practice the traditional Shaman belief, did not mean that he had not maintained the culture of the Hmong. He felt that the language, clothes, arts, and music are all part of the culture, and
although his belief system was based on Christianity, he still valued the Hmong culture in all other aspects and respects all those who practice the traditional belief system of ancestral worship.

There are numerous ideas on how children should be taught the Hmong culture. According to the participants, they had created time in their homes to only speak Hmong and to teach their children the cultural belief system. Some participants took their children to more cultural ceremonies and showed them the meanings behind the rituals. Others raised their children the same way they were raised with cultural standards and expectations. However, two of the younger male participants said that picked and chose what to pass on, and what not to pass on to their children when they had children. Another participant stated that he wanted to teach the Hmong culture to his children, but they must also want to learn it for themselves. He continued to say that he will need to expose his children to the Hmong community and culture more.

There were mixed emotions when it came to how much the community supported the Hmong community’s celebration of cultures. Overall, all the participants agreed that there was minimal support from the community. They felt that some officials from school districts and the city had participated in the Hmong New Year celebrations whether in Merced, Marysville, Fresno, or other cities. However, they felt that there had been some internal conflicts within the Hmong community in certain cities that somehow created a divide in some cultural celebrations.

Here is what the participants had to say to answer this question,

Vang answered,

Yes, they help somehow. They come to the Hmong New Year every year.

Vue said,
They support it somewhat, but not totally. Only the ones that have been invited are present. The community as a whole does not get involved.

Chang replied,

There is some internal squabbling. Our tradition and culture has kind of been diluted and not everyone values it as much as they should.

Yang stated,

I think so. Every time there is a celebration or event, all the Hmong people flock to it, just like when the opened Vang Pao Elementary. It was a full house.

Xiong responded,

We are a very small town, and I think that the community supports our Hmong community and our culture and celebrations.

Overall, the participants felt that if community members were invited, they usually showed up. There has been representation from local school districts, public officials and other dignitaries. However, the mainstream community was hardly involved in Hmong cultural celebrations.

First of all, two participants felt that the mainstream community needs to be informed about the Hmong and who they are before they will join hands and support the Hmong’s effort. Moua and Lor believed that the culture, history, stories, and songs of the Hmong need to be in written down and made available to the public so that they will understand who the Hmong are and then maybe then they’ll be more likely to support and help preserve the Hmong culture. Moua strongly felt that the Hmong have to show something that is unique and somewhat needed by the mainstream community so they feel vested in promoting the culture. He believed that it may have to start from the Hmong people writing all the great things about their people in order for others to find an interest in helping. Vang
believed that in order for the mainstream community to support the Hmong in this endeavor, it must start from the Hmong parents. He said,

The parents need to teach the language and culture to their children so they don’t have identity issues while growing up. When the Hmong community does not see any importance in preserving their culture, the mainstream culture would not pay attention to it. They must see the value in keeping their culture before others will see it.

Theme 3: Generational Differences

Of the eight interviewed, five of them stated that the Hmong they speak today is different from that of their parents and grandparents. All five of them also said that their children’s Hmong is different from the Hmong they speak since their children would include many English terms even when speaking in Hmong. Two of the participants said that there is a startling difference between the Hmong they speak and the Hmong their children speak. In fact, these two participants shared that their children speak very little Hmong. One participant said that his Hmong hasn’t changed much from his parents and also stated that his kids can all speak Hmong. Vang said,

The kids nowadays speak more English. My parents told me to go to school and speak only English so now I speak more English than Hmong. Our language has changed because of where we live.

Moua asserted,

We understand each other and the tone and language is still the same. They obviously know more vocabulary. My dad is Green/Blue Hmong, but since marrying my mom, he switched over to speak White Hmong.

Lor replied,

Tej zag yeej txawv lawm vim tas yus nam puab has paj lug ntau xwb. Yus has cov basics xwb. Has txug daily conversations tes peb suav dlawg yeej has tuab yaam. Peb tseem has tau tuab yaam li peb nam hab txiv.

(English Translation)
Maybe it is different because my mom uses metaphors quite a bit. I only speak the basics. When it comes to daily conversations then we all speak the same. We still can communicate similar to our mom and dad.

Moua said,

I think there are some differences between the way we speak and the ways my parents speak. Compared to my children, there are startling differences. Their accent is different. My oldest speaks in Hmong, but my younger children can only understand me and can’t really speak it.

Lee stated,

Txawv heev. Cia muaj piv rau peb niamb thiab peb txiv lawv, lawv hais, lawv nyob lub teb chaws nplog ces lawv siv lus Hmoob xyaw lus nplog. Hos peb phaum ces peb hais peb hom lus sib xyaws nrog lus nplog, lus thaih, thiab lus Mes Kas. Vim peb Hmoob tsis muaj teb chaws ces peb khiaw txog qhov twg ces peb pauv me ntsis raws cov teb chaws.

(English Translation)

Very different. For example, my mom and my dad, they live in Laos so they use Hmong and mix it with the Lao language. And our generation, we speak our language and mix it with the Lao language, the Thai language, and English. Because we, Hmong, don’t have a country, therefore, whenever we move to a different country, we have to change a little bit in order to fit in.

Three of the participants watched Hmong TV and listened to the Hmong Radio daily so they saw and heard Hmong on a daily basis. The younger participants did not watch Hmong TV or listen to the Hmong Radio; however, they did associate with friends who do spoke Hmong on a regular basis. Lee stated,

Peb cov lus Hmoob peb siv hauv tsev neeg, tshoob kos, ntees ploj ntees tuag, koom txoos ua kev zoo siab. Thaum peb tuaj mus sib ntsib sib xyuas. Thaum peb mus ua ke, peb yuvau tau xaiv pab neeg uas tham raws li yus seem. Lus Hmoob yooj yim thiab zoo hais tshaj plaws. Lub xov tooj cua thiab Hmoob TV ces yog muaj cov laus mas yeej tso TV tas hnub. Cov laus pw tim tsev kho mob los yeej hnow lus Hmoob vim lawv saib tau TV Hmoob hauv tsev kho mob tib si. Tab sis peb xav kom Hmoob TV no muab cov nam zoo los tso xwb es txhob tso tej uas muaj kev sib ntaus sib tua thiab kev dag dhau lawm rau cov me nyuam saib.
(English Translation)

We use our Hmong language in our household, during weddings, funerals, and gatherings for celebrations. When we go places or visit and meet others or we usually associate with the people that speak similar to us. Hmong language is the most easy to use. The Hmong TV and radio is on all day if you have elders in the home. Even when they stay at the hospital, the elders can still hear the Hmong language through Hmong TV. However, we wished that Hmong TV would show movies that don’t include violence and too much comedy for our children to watch.

In terms of identifying with Hmong or American, most of the older generations identified more with being Hmong while the younger group identified themselves as Hmong Americans. Only one participant stated that he identified himself just as an American since we are in America. He believed that since we are just one human race, there should not be any ethnic distinctions while one other participant said that she couldn’t say that she’s 100% Hmong, but that she was a fusion of both cultures; therefore, she identified herself as Hmong American because she can’t do what her parents have done back in Laos. Participants stated that they would identify themselves as Hmong Americans when they are at work and around others who are not Hmong. In the words of the participants:

Yang said,

I am a fusion of both. I can’t say that I am 100% Hmong. I can’t do everything that Hmong women can do. I hope I am a nice blend of both cultures.

Chang answered,

I’ve always considered myself as Hmong American. I fought for this country so I am truly a Hmong American. It is an important part of my identity.

Vang responded,

I associate myself with Hmong and American; therefore, I identify myself as Hmong American.

Lee answered,
We wear many hats. When we start heading home from work, then we start wearing our Hmong women’s hat—practicing Hmong hospitality. When we are at work then we are Hmong American women.

Three of the participants identified their way of life as mostly a 50/50 split between Hmong and American. They were the younger generation who were born after 1980 and were either born in America or came to this country at a very young age. The three older participants were very comfortable living the Hmong lifestyle, although they did mentioned that it has changed from when their parents were in Laos. Their Hmong lifestyle in America entails them still practicing Hmong cultural values, beliefs, and practices, speaking Hmong, appreciating Hmong language and history, and trying to pass those beliefs, values, and practices to their children as best they could. This was what the participants had to share:

Xiong stated,

We grew up in more of a Hmong lifestyle since my parents were very traditional and strict.

Yang responded,

I identify more with the Hmong American way of life because I am individualistic in thinking to achieve my goals, but I value big family and that’s why I am a fusion of both cultures.

Moua said,

I live as a Hmong American. I am very comfortable being a Hmong, but I just don’t feel comfortable dressing up in our Hmong clothes due to our line of work and the city life. I am more Hmong.

Lee replied,
Yuav ua lub neej Hmoob li ntuj qub qab los tsis tau. Ho yuav nyob noj li Mes Kas los tsis tau.

(English Translation)

To live as a Hmong as in the old country is not possible. To live as Americans is also not feasible.

Most participants have identified their lifestyle as more of a Hmong American lifestyle and yet they are trying to maintain as much Hmong culture as they can. The older participants said that they tried to live as much as they could in the Hmong lifestyle; however, they must adapt for their children’s sake.

**Hmong morals and values.** Every Hmong value was important to two of the participants surveyed, and again, the list is endless, yet many of the same values are repeated by each of the surveyed participants. Family values, hard-working, motivation to succeed, Hmong history, oral storytelling, the written and oral language, clothing, cultural practices, beliefs, and lineage, ways in which the Hmong meet and greet others, respect for one another and knowing one’s role or place in life, collective thinking, and help and support for one another were values identified by the six participants.

The participants stated,

Lor said,

Right now, we are losing our culture and to be able to know your culture, such as just the basic meeting and greeting people is very important to me.

Lee replied,


(English Translation)
The Hmong language, clothing, cultural practices are important. Everything about the Hmong and their life is in the minds of the Hmong and all can be found in the cultural rituals and practices. As for American values, an individual’s right to have choices and make his or her decisions is great. Freedom and many more great things; helping give life to others; being able to own a house and cars. If you really want something, it can be obtained, such as if you want to be a politician or get an education.

Moua said,

Hmong values important to me are: hard-working, rau siab khwv, kub siab ua. Hmong history, oral storytelling, language and culture are all important values. The support from home and other relatives of the extended family is tremendous in the Hmong culture!

Respect is a value that is most valued in the Hmong culture. Respecting the elders is considered to be of the highest wisdom in the Hmong culture. One participant showed respect to his older siblings and parents by not talking back to anyone of them. He did what he was asked to do, and he taught his children the family lineage so his kids can respect everyone too.

Communicating with parents and talking to them shows that you respect them. Spending time with them also shows that you value and respect them. One participant showed respect to the mother-in-law and her mother by showing great love and being fearful of any curse from the elders. She felt that actions spoke louder than words and one must love his /her parents and parents-in-law because children always practiced what they see. She too also loved teaching her children her family lineage and relationships. Addressing aunts and uncles, grandparents, great aunts and uncles with the proper title was showing respect and doing culturally acceptable actions at all times.

Lor shared a relationship between treating parents well and having a happy life. He said,

They brought us here, so I don’t want to cause any stress for them. If we want to have a good life, we are going to support our parents, my mom so they don’t have to worry about bills. Wherever we go, just tell them, if we
are going to be late, just tell them. Tell them the truth, don’t tell lies and just treat them normal, the way you would like to be treated.

The two participants who asked advice from their parents or parents-in-law most of the time also showed that they give a lot of respect to their parents. Yang showed respect to her in-laws by talking to them respectfully. She tried to convey reason to her in-laws by stating the fact that people are human and are not perfect; however, people can forgive each other. She and her mother-in-law took turns cooking dinner and spoke nicely to each other. Yang said,

We have such a wonderful relationship by helping each other. We celebrate each other’s birthdays and special occasions. We can count on each other. We all look at our calendars to plan things and have mutual respect for one another.

Xiong gave her dad a lot of respect. She shared that her dad was very much respected in the community because he was a “go between” person or “mediator” for most of the weddings in town and he ran many of the funeral services there. Xiong’s mom and dad raised 12 of them, and there was not an option not to respect that. She said, “Having respect for your parents is just part of growing up in the Hmong culture.”

Back in Laos, most family decisions were made only with the approval of parents and elders. Life in America has changed some of those practices. Overall, six of the eight did not consult their parents as much as they would have in the old country. Many of them felt that their parents did not have the capability to counsel them in personal matters. However, Lor stated that he keeps his mom in mind whenever making a decision and only wants the decision to impact her in the most positive way possible. The participant may ask for advice here and there, but most of the time, it is only when cultural and ritual facts and details are unclear to the participant that he will ask. Vang lost his mom when he was 8 years old. Once
his dad remarried, he felt that he lost the trust in him, so he did not consult his dad any longer. He kept his circle of friends very small.

Vang said:

I don’t consult with my dad anymore since my mother died and he remarried. You can’t depend on your friends, your parents, etc. all the time. I keep my circle very small.

Lor also used to consult his older brother; however, once the older brother moved away, he made decisions on his own. He did not consult his mother, in fear that it would cause her more undo stress. Lor stated,

I don’t really ask anyone because my dad left us a long time ago and I don’t consult with anybody. I make decisions on my own. I use to consult my older brother when he lived with us, but now, I just do it. I hope I am not offending them, but I just have to make certain decisions on my own. I don’t consult with them because I don’t feel they can guide me. However, everything I do is to impact them in the most positive way.

One participant, Moua only consulted with elders when there was a life situation that he had not experienced and therefore would like the elder’s perceptions. Moua asserted,

If it’s a personal thing, I don’t consult them, but if it’s family drama, then yes. I can ask for advice, but it really depends on the individual. If I need facts about the Hmong culture, I ask my dad, grandpa, uncles, etc. I don’t really ask my dad about personal things. Life decisions are really mine to make.

Lee and her husband stated that she and her husband did not consult family members when it came to their work or career, but when a problem arises and deals with the whole family or clan, then they would consult the clan. Lee said,

As for us, we hardly ever ask anyone because they don’t understand what we must do. We make decisions on our own. We go through trials and errors on our own. Now we have kids and will consult with them occasionally. In terms of our personal life and career choices, that was how we did it. As for the Hmong ways, we have to seek for advice and do what the majority feels is proper. It has to be that they understand and think similarly.

Xiong and Yang consulted with their parents all the time; and these two were the female participants in the survey. Xiong was unmarried; therefore, she said that she consulted her older siblings as well.

Xiong said,

All the time. I consult my parents every time. Sometimes I talk to my older siblings, but even when friends are just coming over, we have to tell our parents. Other times, after consulting with my siblings, and they say, “Just do it,” then I’ll go forward with my plans.

Yang was married, and she and her husband consulted with her in-laws all the time. They had a really good relationship, and they could trust her in-laws for everything. There was a very strong sense of support and mutual understanding between her, her husband and his parents. She really looked up to her mother-in-law and father-in-law for all their support and advice.

Yang replied,

I consult my parents-in-law every time. We have a very good relationship with my in-laws. We help each other. Maybe when things are personal, we may not, but mostly weekly.

American values. Hmong elders have a hard time accepting the fact that many of the children born in America have embraced the American values. The elders do not favor the independence and individualistic thinking that comes along with their children being born in America. It has been very difficult for them to adjust to the American way of thinking and living.
As for the American values, the participants mentioned the American people’s individualistic view on life; this value has helped them to achieve their goals in life and to become more independent. Simplicity is an American value that a participant mentioned. She stated that the American weddings and funerals were not as complex and lengthy as the Hmong weddings and funerals. Having the freedom to choose and equality for both genders to get an education are important in America. The different American holidays were important to one of the participants. One participant said, “Being in America, one has to adapt and learn the American culture too, and through the holidays, we are able to learn about the American culture.” Three of the participants mentioned the fact that education is highly valued by both Hmong and Americans, and that it is only in America that education is attainable.

Summary

This chapter presented the research findings from the survey data that was collected at the Hmong International New Year in Fresno, California from December 26, 2015 to December 29, 2015, and documented the findings that were shared in the eight face-to-face interviews. The quantitative finding showed that the better a person is able to speak, read, and write in Hmong, the more important the Hmong language is to that individual. It also showed that the younger a person is, the more likely for that person to choose to speak English over Hmong. The results also showed that there was a significant relationship between how well someone speaks, reads, and writes Hmong and how important the Hmong language is to that speaker. In the qualitative results, three themes emerged: cultural pride, language maintenance and loss, and generational differences. From both the quantitative and qualitative data two overarching conclusions emerged.
The findings suggest that the maintenance of the language and culture is, in fact, hard to do in a society where English is the dominant language; however, participants are able to maintain their language and culture through family communications with their elders in the home and through the involvement of the community gatherings as well as cultural rituals, events, and celebrations.

Since having seen the Hmong language being more visible in recent years in the different community organizations and a few public facilities and offices, there is a slight sense of hope that the Hmong language just might have a chance of making it to the next few generations. However, the participants shared that in order for the Hmong language and culture to be maintained for future generations, scholars must sense the urgency and take the initiative to put Hmong stories, rituals, songs, poems, and their history down in books, movies, and preserve it.

Also, the participants suggested that schools, churches, and community based organizations could help to preserve and teach the Hmong language and culture to Hmong children and all those who may be interested. When schools validate the Hmong children’s language and culture by teaching it, then this is when the Hmong children will value their own language and culture more than today, and when they associate a value with their language and culture, it is more likely that they will learn and maintain it for years to come.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION/SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study examined language loss and maintenance in the Hmong communities in the United States, particularly in California, where the study was conducted. The Hmong people are a group of refugee immigrants who came to the United States beginning in 1975 with the last wave of Hmong refugee immigrants arriving in the United States in 2005. The Hmong people have been an oral culture for thousands of years and have had several attempts of establishing a written language until 1953, when the Hmong Romanized Popular Alphabet was created. It was created by Yves Bertrais, William Smalley and Linwood Barney. It has only been 40 years since the first Hmong first arrived on American soil; however, many Hmong students today are losing their language and culture at a rapid pace. It can be assumed that those without the ability to speak, read, and write in Hmong, will eventually lose their connection with their people and their culture.

As stated earlier in chapter 1, the 2010 U.S. Census indicated that there were 256,430 Hmong people living in the United States (U.S); however, only 17,950 are ages 62 or older (Pfeifer et al. 2013). This means that there are very few Hmong elders left who can speak Hmong fluently and have a very good knowledge of their history and culture. The ability to speak in one’s primary language is very important for passing down history, cultural traditions, values, and beliefs from one generation to the next. In addition, an individual’s language must be maintained in order to truly understand and appreciate one’s culture and develop a healthy identity. The ability to maintain one’s language is the key to sustaining the culture in the presence of a dominant language (Keiser, 2003).
Using a mixed-methods approach, this study aimed to discover the current speaking, reading, and writing abilities of the Hmong community and their cultural perceptions as it relates to their language and cultural loss or maintenance.

The research questions were:

1) What is the present level of Hmong speaking, reading, and writing ability and cultural values, and how does this information relate to other demographic information?

2) What are the Hmong community, families, and organizations in the U.S. currently doing to maintain the Hmong language and culture for future generations of Hmong?

Two major conclusions were discovered as a result of this study. In this section, those conclusions and major findings will be discussed as related to the research questions and compared with the current literature review. Finally, implications of the present research and recommendations for further research will be presented in the following pages.

**Summary of Results**

The survey questionnaire was given to 301 participants from 11 different states and one each from Australia and China during the Hmong International New Year in Fresno, California between December 26, 2014 and December 29, 2014. From among the 301 participants, eight individuals meeting the set criteria were asked for face-to-face interviews to get a deeper understanding of where the Hmong language and culture were in terms of language and culture loss and maintenance.

The data revealed that due to different societal factors, the Hmong people, similar to the immigrants who came before them, were also experiencing language and culture loss in varying degrees depending on the demographic of the city and
state they lived in, the patterns and preferences of language use inside and outside of the home by parents and children, and individual attitudes and behaviors towards the primary language also caused a shift in the patterns of language use and cultural maintenance.

The results from the research also indicated that the Hmong people have a very strong affinity for being Hmong. The Hmong people also believe that it is very important to be able to speak, read, and write in Hmong, and most parents stated that they encourage their children to speak Hmong as much as possible. However, the environment in which they all live in today does not necessarily support their intentions. Also, as a result of instruction at school being done only in English and the fact that very few high schools offered Hmong as a foreign language to students, many Hmong students did not see the importance of maintaining their native language and preferred using English over Hmong because it wasn’t being validated in their school curriculum. The importance placed on the Hmong language and culture by schools and communities has a negative impact on Hmong students’ attitudes and perceptions of the Hmong language and culture and whether or not they want to learn it or maintain it.

**Quantitative Data**

The survey data showed that participants who took the survey represented 11 states and the majority of the participants were from California. Surprisingly, there were roughly an equal number of males to females, as well as an equal number of married to single people involved. Half of the participants reported that they have children and the other half reported having no children. The majority of respondents practice Shamanism while a quarter of the participants practice Christianity. Most of the people surveyed learned how to read and write Hmong by themselves, while some received help from friends and relatives and a small
number learned to read and write from schools and organizations. According to the survey, the Romanized Popular Alphabet is the main Hmong writing system being used by the Hmong people today. Over 91% of the participants surveyed use the Hmong RPA, followed by only 2% of the participants using the Pahawh system.

A series of seven chi-square analyses were conducted to examine the global research questions. The chi-square analyses included:

1) participants’ speaking ability by their belief in the importance of speaking Hmong,

2) participants’ reading ability by their belief in the importance of reading Hmong,

3) participants’ writing ability by their belief in the importance of writing Hmong,

4) participants’ speaking ability by their belief in the importance of their children speaking, reading, and writing Hmong,

5) participants’ reading ability by their belief in the importance of their children speaking, reading, and writing Hmong,

6) participants’ writing ability by their belief in the importance of their children speaking, reading, and writing Hmong,

7) participants’ encouraging children to speak Hmong by the importance of their children speaking, reading, and writing Hmong.

The overall finding of these analyses was that the better the participants speak, read, and write, the more important they believe Hmong language skills are both for themselves and their children. Overwhelmingly, the participants’ perceptions of the importance of language abilities had a significant impact on their speaking, reading, and writing ability as well as the rate at which they will
encourage their children to speak, read, and write in Hmong. The majority of the parents stated that they encourage their children to speak, read, and write Hmong; however, over 73% of the surveyed participants reported that their children use the English language when speaking to them.

Currently 40% of the participants favored the use of the English language while another 40% favor using the White Hmong dialect. The other 20% either favored the Green Hmong dialect or a combination of Hmong and one or two other languages. The vast majority of the Hmong people surveyed could speak the Hmong language, although the younger the participant was, the less fluent they were in speaking Hmong and the less they favored speaking Hmong. It was also true that the younger they were the less ability to read and write they had, and their perception of the Hmong language was related to how well they spoke, read, or wrote Hmong.

**Qualitative Data**

The cultural component of the survey and the interview results indicated that participants had a strong Hmong identity. The majority (n=229, 76.1%) of the participants responded that they love being Hmong and 63 (20.9%) responded that they like being Hmong. Eight people declined to state whether or not they like being Hmong or otherwise, while only 1 (0.3%) person disliked being Hmong out of the 301 surveyed.

The survey also indicated that a half of the participants would highly encourage their children to marry Hmong and a quarter of the participants stated that their children must marry Hmong, followed by another quarter who were undecided. Four participants indicated they will less likely have their children marry Hmong and only two reported that they will discourage their children from marrying Hmong.
It was also agreed by the participants that the Hmong language has shifted and changed over time as the Hmong migrated from country to country. The majority of the participants reiterated the same information about why they are able to maintain their language and culture to this day. Participants stated that having to live with their parents or parents-in-law and their involvement in the Hmong community’s cultural rituals and events had helped them to maintain their language abilities and their cultural practices.

In order for the Hmong people to be able to maintain their language and culture, participants felt that scholars needed to have Hmong stories, rituals, poems chants, songs and the Hmong history written down into books or recorded somehow and for schools to take an active role in making the Hmong language available as a foreign language, and better still, to offer Hmong dual immersion programs for young children.

**Themes**

There were three major themes that emerged from this study. The first theme indicated that the Hmong people are a very proud and humble group of people. They are happy to have such a rich oral culture and history despite having to move from country to country in their 4000-5000 year history, yet were able to still maintain their language, culture and history to this day. They are a group with a unique tradition and language and would like to preserve them for future generations. As a result of the Hmong’s involvement in the Secret War as allies of the Americans, their lives were in danger and they became refugees of the war.

It is evident that the second theme involves the Hmong people’s pattern of language maintenance and language loss as well as cultural maintenance and loss. From the interviews and survey data, there was concrete evidence that the language was changing with each new generation born in this country. The
second theme was that language shift was inevitable, and the Hmong community was watching language shift right in front of their eyes, and realized that too much change in such a short time could mean that the younger generation would lose their language and culture and would soon lose their identity. The last theme was on generational differences in both language and culture. It was evident that there are differences in both the language and culture since the Hmong people’s arrival in the United States.

In the section that follows, ideas of what can be done to maintain the Hmong language and slow down the process of language shift was discussed as well as implications for practice, recommendations, and research implications were shared.

**Discussion**

In chapter 4, data from the 301 surveys indicated the current level of the Hmong speaking, reading, and writing abilities, and the interviews helped to shed light on factors that prevented language and cultural loss in the Hmong community. In addition, factors that have negatively affected language and cultural maintenance had also been revealed through the eight face-to-face interviews as well as through the survey data. From the interviews, several themes emerged as the participants shared their rich experience. This section presented an expanded discussion of the research findings presented in chapter 4 along with a discussion of sources presented in the literature review. This section focused on the primary findings that were revealed based on the emergence of common themes and the discovery of other significant findings. The following discussion focused on the major findings as they relate to the research questions.

Part of the intention of this research was to increase awareness within the Hmong community as well as the community at large that the Hmong language
has been undergoing some changes, and if certain efforts were not put in place, the Hmong language could be a language of the past. As noted in the literature (Akasaka, et al., 2008), the Hawaiian language was reported as an endangered language when the population of the speakers decreased to only 8000 in a population of 400,000. Linguists shared that “the disappearance of languages and linguistics diversity is a major loss to linguistic scholarship and science” (p. 1), and that the endangered status of a language could mean that the language was close to disappearing. However, upon the realization that the Hmong children are losing their language skills could bring about awareness to and result in increased interest in language maintenance (p. x).

The first point in this discussion was about the pattern of language loss in the Hmong language and that it may be facing the early stages of language endangerment. In those situations, Wurm (2003) came up with a five point rubric to assess language endangerment. Those levels are:

1) A language is potentially endangered if the children start preferring the dominant language and learn the obsolescing language imperfectly.

2) It is endangered if the youngest speakers are young adults, and there are no or very few child speakers.

3) It is seriously endangered if the youngest speakers are middle-aged or past middle age.

4) It is terminally endangered or moribund if there are only a few elderly speakers left.

5) A language is dead when there are no speakers left at all. (p. ix)

When using Wurm’s scale to evaluate the Hmong language, the Hmong language could be said to be at Stage 1 where he stated, “a language is potentially endangered if the children start preferring the dominant and learn the obsolescing
language imperfectly” (p. ix). The face-to-face interviews also suggested that the Hmong language was, in fact, being replaced with English by the Hmong children due to the ease of use and the fact that it is the main language of instruction at school. It was refreshing to learn, however, that it is only at stage one and not further along in the stage of endangerment than once thought.

There is now more hope for the maintenance of the Hmong language. Due to Microsoft’s adoption of the Hmong language as one of the world languages for translation, the younger generation would be able to access the language more readily now and in the future. Crystal (2000) shared six mechanisms to intervene in the preservation of a language as stated below.

1) increasing the prestige of its speakers;
2) increasing the wealth of its speakers;
3) increasing the power of the speakers;
4) improving its presence in the educational system;
5) ensuring that the language be written down; and
6) providing access to electronic technology to its speakers.

Three of those mechanisms may have been suggested by the interviewees for maintaining the Hmong language. They are mechanism number four, five and six. Many participants voiced that it doesn’t matter how important the Hmong language is to them and their children, if the Hmong language is not taught in schools, their children will not want to learn the Hmong language. This would be closely tied to mechanism number four above. This was also supported by what Dr. Va (2011) pointed out in his article entitled, Language as Identity: the Hmong Language. Dr. Va believes that Hmong parents should get involved in the children’s education and learn about the school system. By getting involved and learning how schools operate, there may be a good chance that the Hmong
language, history, and culture could be added to the school curricula. When the schools help to promote the Hmong language and culture, Hmong students’ identity and self-concept will be enhanced, therefore, the possibility of closing that achievement gap (Va, 2011, para. 6).

With three of the six mechanisms identified, it is up to the Hmong community to work on setting those three mechanisms in motion and to prepare to work on the first three of those six mechanisms. A process will indeed need to be in place for the other three mechanisms to come into play, however, mechanisms four, five, and six will help start this process. (Crystal, 2000; Minet & Wang, 2008)

According to the survey results and interviews, there was evidence that the Hmong language was indeed being spoken by the older generation more so than the younger generation. The Hmong language has been used less and less by its young native speakers because it was not seen, heard, or being used in the school arena; therefore, it is very likely that the Hmong language “may eventually be replaced by the second language,” as stated by Grenoble and Whaley (2006, p. 14). From the time the Hmong people started coming to the United States to the present, there had been a shift from using mostly Hmong when they arrived, to now where half of the people surveyed preferred to use English. From the data collected, there were 112 participants who reported using English most often and only 116 reported using White Hmong, while 47 respondents reported using Green/Blue Hmong most often. Xiong & Xiong (2011) reported only 3% of Hmong Americans spoke only English in 1990, about 8% spoke only English between the years 2006-2010 (p. 4). One of the participants from the interview stated,
The kids really speak different from us. It is very hard for them to speak. We can still speak in complete sentences. They only know “yes” and “no.” They cannot speak Hmong. We can speak Hmong to them, but they will reply in English only.

There were also data from the literature to support the fact that more and more children were now choosing to speak English at home. A study by Xiong and Xiong (2011) indicated that while only 3.9% of first generation Hmong students favored speaking only English at home, 10.6% of the second generation Hmong students spoke only English at home (p. 8).

Many of the younger participants admitted that they could not read or write and wished to skip the two questions that required them to read and write Hmong. Since many of the younger Hmong participants were born in the United States and have only been educated in the English language, it was evident that they could not read or write in Hmong as noted by Dr. Va, a professor at California State University of Sacramento. He asserted “eight percent of my students can read only simple Hmong and cannot write in Hmong.” (Va, 2011, para. 1) Dr. Va collected pre and post-tests for 5 years on his Hmong students and noticed that in his classes in the first 3 years, about 70% of the students tested fluent in Hmong; however, that number dropped to 53% in the last year. He concluded that the Hmong children were losing the Hmong language and were rapidly assimilating into the mainstream culture (Va, 2011, para. 1). Today, with the third generation, I assume that the percentage of them favoring English has dramatically increased.

The participants also shared that in this day and age, it is critical for people to be bilingual if not multilingual since there will be more job opportunities for those that are able to converse in various languages. In the literature, Gibbons and Ramirez (2004) list several benefits of being able to maintain one’s language.
They said that the opportunities that come with being able to speak a person’s primary language include a better self-concept, more travel and employment opportunities, better cognitive flexibility, and overall, higher levels of proficiency and literacy in the second language. In addition, being able to maintain one’s language means that a person is a culturally competent citizen internationally (p. 2).

By using a typological model from the literature by Edwards (1992), it can help gauge the vitality of the Hmong language and culture. The questions in this typological model are:

1. How highly regarded are the following languages [insert languages] in (name of state/country)?

2. How proud of their cultural history and achievements are the following groups?

3. Estimate the birth rates of the following groups [as above] in [name of country].

4. To what extent do the following groups marry only within their own groups?

5. How much are the following languages taught in [country]?

6. How much are the following languages taught in schools?

7. How much political power do the following groups have in [name of state]? (Edwards, 1992, p. 46)

When the Hmong language was being evaluated based on the typological model above, it can be said that the Hmong language was not highly regarded in the United States. In fact, it is not regarded at all in many states. The Hmong language was only taught in a few schools across the U.S. Also, since the Hmong
people are new to this country, there has been very little political power associated with the Hmong people and their language.

Question 2 above reads, “How proud of their cultural history and achievements are the following groups?” The participants from this study stated that they were proud to be Hmong for many different reasons, such as their language, culture, history, tradition and various other reasons. From one of the survey questions, the participants also stated that they were proud of the Hmong people’s adaptability and adjustment to life in America and their successes and achievements in the 40 years of being in America. However, there were some complexities involved when analyzing this question. The location and time of the year in which the survey data were collected marked the peak in positive feelings experienced by most people since it was a festive time of the year. It could be assumed that people who were proud of their culture and language were the ones that attended the Hmong New Year. There was no negativity associated with the people surveyed.

Question 6 in the typology model wanted to know how much the language has been taught in schools and in the country. In this matter, we have heard from the participants that the Hmong language has yet to be widely available. The Hmong language had only been taught in a few high schools across the nation and there exist just a few charter schools or just a handful of Hmong dual-immersion programs nationwide. As learned through the work of Joshua Fishman (2001) and other scholars on languages (Dalby, 2003; Edwards, 1999; Gibbons & Ramirez, 2004; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006; Janse & Tol, 2003; Kouritzin, 1999; Nettle & Romaine, 2000) in the United States after him, whenever languages come in contact, the result could be language maintenance, bilingualism, or language shift contributing to possible language loss.
Many participants asserted that they live in and around the Hmong community in Fresno, Clovis, Merced, and Marysville and were able to hear the Hmong language being spoken, see the written language in the community, and interact with the Hmong people within those communities. These were the key factors that had helped the participants to maintain their language and culture. And where there was not viable communities speaking the native language, chances were, if people lived there long enough, they would lose their language and culture. One participant, who lives in Los Angeles, could see himself losing the language if he lives there long enough. Unless he visits his mom in Fresno or his mom visits him, he doesn’t see any Hmong or uses his native Hmong language. On this topic, Nettle and Romaine (2000) said,

A language is not a self-sustaining entity. It can only exist where there is a community to speak and transmit it. A community of people can exist, only where there is a viable environment for them to live in, and a means of making a living. Where communities cannot thrive, their languages are in danger. (p. 5)

During the days of data collection, I had the opportunity to meet several people from New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and parts of North Carolina where they could not speak much in Hmong anymore. Their reason for the loss in their ability to speak the language is because they live in isolation from the Hmong community and did not have to use Hmong. So depending on where people live, there may be opportunities to use the Hmong language where it will thrive, or if people live in cities where there are no other Hmong around, there will not be any opportunities to hear, use, or see any Hmong. This was and still is one of the main reasons for a language and culture to be endangered.

Participants agreed that it is very important for them to be able to read, write, and speak in Hmong, and there was a significant relationship between their perception of the importance of the Hmong language and their ability to speak,
read, and write Hmong. The better they were at speaking, reading, and writing Hmong, the more important the Hmong language was to them. Out of the 301 people surveyed, 220 (73.1%) responded that they could read well or very well in Hmong and 183 (60.8%) respondents claimed that they could write well or very well in Hmong. Yet, when their self-ratings and actual skills were evaluated by the researcher, the percentages were found to be much lower than claimed. Only 140 (46.5%) participants were rated as fluent readers and 102 (33.9%) were evaluated as not fluent. Under the writing skills category, 97 (32.2%) participants were found to be proficient writers, 94 (31.2%) participants were found to be non-writers, and 50 (16.6%) participants were found to be at the basic level of writing. It seemed that many of the participants may have overrated their verbal and literacy skills not knowing that a skills ability test would be included in the survey. However, factors such as speaking, reading, and writing under pressure or in front of other people may have affected their performances.

After looking at their writing, out of the 301 surveyed, only 60 (19.9%) participants were found to be at the advanced level. However, I would like to caution that the Hmong sentences they translated only required basic writing skills and there was not a need for any academic language since the content was about a family’s favorite place to visit in April. Since the Hmong writing system has only been recently developed in the 1950’s, there has not been too much development in terms of an academic content language per se.

In addition, in the study by Ningsheng (1992), two factors were identified to have a positive effect on language maintenance and the reverse effect on language shift. These were socioeconomic status and the residential pattern. Speakers who lived near each other provided the opportunities to use and maintain their native language, and more educated people place more emphasis on
maintaining their language (para. 5). Ningsheng (1992) agreed that when there are interracial marriages, it is more likely that the primary language will be neglected. In the Chinese communities in the United States, China Towns have been one way of providing the Chinese community opportunities to sustain the language and culture because most Chinese people tend to marry within their community (Ningsheng, 1992). In the Hmong community, we are experiencing some language maintenance, bilingualism, and language shift. More and more Hmong children are marrying outside of the Hmong community, and when the Hmong marries outside of the Hmong community, it is more likely that they will not speak the Hmong language.

Language maintenance had been a major challenge for most minority populations in the United States since English is the universal language. The English language has been referred to as the “killer language” or “predator” language by linguists (Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Although maintaining the Hmong language has been challenging, the Hmong people have been able to maintain their language for over thousands of years since migrating from Laos. In the next part of this discussion, the implications of language loss and maintenance will be discussed.

**Implications for Practice**

From the research, one of the most interesting findings was that there was a significant relationship between their perception of the Hmong language and their ability to speak, read, and write Hmong. Most Hmong surveyed have a strong sense of pride in their language and culture; however, their language and culture were not seen as having any significance in the schools and communities in which they live. Since the Hmong students are instructed only in English, and history courses do not even include anything about the Hmong’s involvement in the
Vietnam War, it can be assumed that the Hmong students’ language and culture have not been validated in any way.

School districts must provide the opportunities for students to learn their primary language and culture. Hmong should be offered as a foreign language course at different high schools in the Central Valley. Another option for practice is to have Hmong dual immersion programs in the elementary levels where there is a high population of Hmong students. Once schools acknowledge Hmong students, their history, and the rich language that they come with, the Hmong students will be reminded of the importance of their language and culture, and they too will see the importance in their language. Unfortunately, right now, the Hmong students do not have any venues for learning Hmong and to realize the great benefits that come with being literate in one’s primary language. Gibbons and Ramirez (2004) want to emphasize those benefits. They believe that maintaining the first language helps with positive self-concept, more travel and employment opportunities, better cognitive flexibility, and higher levels of proficiency and literacy in the second language (p. 2). The Hmong students’ biggest obstacle in school is to fit into the school culture and the mainstream culture even at the cost of losing their language and culture. Schools have a responsibility to educate the whole child and prepare them for the 21st century, which means that students in America should be given the opportunity to speak more than one language in order to compete in the global market.

The other suggestion made by the participants is that scholars must take the initiative to ensure that the language, stories, history, culture, poems and songs are written down. Minet & Wang (2008) mentioned mechanism number 5) which is to ensure that the language gets written down (p. 28). The statement below was taken from one of the eight face-to-face interviews:
We, the older generation did not have the opportunity to get an education, therefore, we cannot prevent this [referring to the language and culture from being lost]. What can protect or prevent this problem is for you scholars to write things down using our written language and store this knowledge away so that if we do go away from our language and culture, we still have a way to relearn it.

The previous quote suggested that education plays an important role in the preservation of a culture through written and oral forms so that future generations can go back to it. As the researcher, I do believe that schools and teachers should create opportunities for students to record their history and struggles through the interviewing of parents and elders from the community. There is very little literature in Hmong and there needs to be equal representation in storybooks that are being read in the classrooms. The lack of Hmong writing and Hmong books causes Hmong students to have a low self-esteem since they cannot validate who they are in any way at school.

This urgency in writing down Hmong stories, cultural practices, and the Hmong history or life experiences is critical to the well-being of the Hmong people and history. The participants feel that if stories are not written down, once the older people all pass on, the younger people will not have any way of learning about the language and culture. There is a strong desire to maintain the language and culture by capturing everything about Hmong in books, movies and by any means of preserving the language and culture. The participants also believe that the scholars need to take the lead in writing everything about Hmong down so that it can be preserved for future generations. Va (2011) encourages students to start capturing their grandparents, parents and even their own life stories down. He stated, “if these stories are not told, acquired, and recorded by the younger generations, then much will be lost” (para. 5). With the Hmong Story 40 project taking place this year, there is a Storytelling component in which students of all
ages are encouraged to tell their story in various ways so that it can be recorded for future generations.

Participants from the interviews agreed with what Va (2011) stated regarding recording life stories. The participants also pointed out that in order for the Hmong language to be maintained, schools need to have programs during the elementary years. However, the parents interviewed say they are helpless when the Hmong language is not being taught in the schools. Some Hmong students have learned how to read and write through churches and non-profit community based organizations, while most learned to read and write on their own using the Hmong primer. However, today, most teenagers cannot even speak Hmong and they choose not to speak Hmong. By the time they are in high school and college, it is too difficult to take Hmong, if it is even being offered at their campuses since many may have already lost touch with the Hmong language and culture. The participants recommend programs from the elementary age before children are set in their ways. Many children refuse to use Hmong because it is not valued by the schools or mainstream community.

**Recommendations**

Numerous research studies on bilingual education reported endless benefits to those who speak two or more languages and the benefits associated with being able to speak multiple languages (Carr, 2015; Freemark & Smith, 2015; Krashen, 1997; National Association for Bilingual Education [NABE], 2015). When students are fluent native speakers, readers, and writers, they can acquire the second or third language with speed and accuracy. In order for the United States to be able to have its citizens compete competitively in the global market, the students must be able to speak more than just English. As a result of these reasons and findings, the following recommendations need to be enacted and are essential
for the emotional, personal, academic, professional, economic growth of the Hmong students and the community at large. The researcher’s recommendations are as follows.

In order to close the achievement gap of the Hmong students in the community, the Hmong language, culture, and history should be included in the school curriculum to validate the Hmong students’ culture, language, and identity. Cultural competency trainings should be required of teachers to ensure that all students are taught to their fullest potential. Hmong children need to be taught in their own language and culture in order to pass on the great morals, values, and cultural belief system. Once Hmong children know their language, who they are and where they came from, they will develop a healthy self-identity which will help them to excel in their academics and become competent global citizens. This, in turn, will help to close the achievement gap in our schools in the nation.

The second recommendation is for state and federal governments to set aside money to create written materials in the Hmong language because there are a very small number of children’s books or materials that are written in the Hmong language. Special funding must be provided for students and schools who will work on recording Hmong life stories, songs, poems, history, cultural beliefs and traditions down in written, audio, or visual forms. The Hmong community only has a little over 17,000 elders who are ages 62 and over; therefore, there isn’t too much time left to capture all the important stories that are experienced by these elders.

Another recommendation is for Hmong parents to push for dual immersion programs in their school districts. Research shows that students who are literate in their primary language can in the long run outperform monolingual students,
which is the reason why all students should be encouraged to learn multiple languages verses just learning English.

Knowing one’s language and culture, and having the strong foundation in one’s language is an added benefit that will prepare the Hmong children to excel in all areas of their academics throughout their lives. These few recommendations could ensure that the Hmong language and culture lives on for future generations. It is really up to each and every individual and family within the Hmong community to take a stand and start today in order for the Hmong language and culture to survive tomorrow. In the great words of Harriet Beecher Stowe, “The past, present, and future are one. They are today.” (Beecher-Stowe, n.d.).

**Future Research**

This study looked at the current perceptions and abilities of the Hmong community in terms of their speaking, reading, and writing. Future research on Hmong language maintenance and language loss could look at the effectiveness of Hmong language courses being offered across the nation, the possibility of offering foreign language courses from elementary to the college level, the patterns or birth rates in the Hmong community, and marriage patterns of the Hmong people. Also, studies could be conducted on the effectiveness of the Hmong charter schools or dual immersion programs in the different states and look at what Hmong materials have been developed and what factors make for an effective Hmong dual immersion program.

Since one of the implications for maintaining the Hmong language is to have schools offer Hmong as a foreign language, by conducting a study on the effectiveness of the existing Hmong foreign language courses in the different high schools across the nation may be ideal. The number of schools offering such courses would give way to the possibility of duplicating effective programs
nationwide. Having a consistent system in place where students can continue after each grade level to learn the language is ideal, yet policies must be in place and some states are better at language planning than others. One such study should be done to look at the process for language planning policies and how to get the Hmong language in that process. Also, such a study on how many schools now have a Hmong foreign language class will reveal how much the Hmong language is being used in schools and how many students are being taught the Hmong language.

Another topic for a future research could be to find out exactly to what extent the Hmong people are marrying within their own group. It was noted in the literature review that marriage patterns and birth rates have a strong connection with language maintenance and language loss. The Hmong household used to include many children in the native country. However, in America, the birth rate seems to be so much lower. In addition, more and more Hmong people are marrying outside of the Hmong community; therefore, knowing the rate of interracial marriages could shed light on how rapidly the Hmong language could be lost.

The current birth rates within the Hmong community are keys to language maintenance. Back in Laos, Hmong families usually have many children because many hands make the work light. However, in this country, with many families requiring both parents to work outside of the homes, there’s been a trend of Hmong families having fewer children. This means there would be fewer people to speak the Hmong language. The more speakers there are speaking the Hmong language, the more powerful and widespread it will be.

In the present study, the participants ranged from ages 18 to 70. In the future, a similar research could be conducted at all the universities with Hmong
students to gauge their perceptions of the Hmong language and culture adding more questions on their perception of the Hmong language and what they think they can do to maintain the language. This will help to increase awareness in that population so great that they may change policies. Again, the older generation thinks very highly of the Hmong language, but they have no control over what their children are learning at school. If the younger generation of Hmong students can see the importance of their language and culture and realize that they must do their part to combat this problem, they may be the key to sustaining this once oral culture to a vibrant literate culture. A possible research study would be to survey the Hmong gangsters or ex-gang members who dropped out of school to see what the schools could have done differently to help them stay in school. Also, a survey question focus for this group of Hmong students would be to learn whether or not having Hmong language and cultural classes would have helped them to stay in school. Also, what perceptions they have on the Hmong language and culture and school in general could also be gauged in future research.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, the participants felt that once a language is lost, the culture will soon follow, as in the example of the story, by Interviewee 8, about the bat that was trying to fit in with the feathered and furry animals, but was not accepted in either of those groups. One of the participants shared that once you do not know your language, you will not know what your culture is, and therefore, you cannot call yourself Hmong. The Hmong people have lived for a long time as an oral culture, and only in 1953 were they handed a written script of their language. It has only been a little over 60 years since the creation of the Hmong written language; however, there has been very little prestige associated with this language in this new nation. Even though the Hmong language does not have the
prestige yet, the Hmong people are hopeful and prideful on being Hmong. Their hope is that scholars will write down the Hmong history, stories, and cultural practices so that later generations can refer back to them. However, it is the work of every Hmong individual to capture the essence of being Hmong in any audio, visual, and written form and preserve these for future generations. The Hmong people value their language and culture very much and hope there will be a formal setting for the teaching of this rich language and culture in the American schools whether public or charter. It is with great urgency, that the recording of the Hmong elders’ experiences be done as soon as possible since there are only a little over 17,000 Hmong elders left in America who are 62 years of age or older. Once they pass on, so will their experience, stories, and knowledge of the Hmong life, language, hopes and dreams for the rest of us. The interconnectedness of language and culture can best be summed by a great poet by the name of Dr. Ulibarri at the El alma de la raza in 1964 (as cited in Smith & Rodriguez, 2011):

In the beginning was the Word. And the Word was made flesh. It was so in the beginning and it is so today. The language, the Word, carries within it the history, culture, the traditions, the very life of a people, the flesh. Language is people. We cannot even conceive of a people without a language, or a language without a people. The two are one and the same. To know one is to know the other. To love one is to love the other.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: SURVEY

Perceptions of Hmong Language and Culture Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option/Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Date Administered: ________________</td>
<td>B. Survey Number: ________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What city and state are you from?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (CITY) ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D (STATE) ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. When were you born?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year: ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Were you born in the U.S.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. no ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. (country of birth) ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. Marital Status:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. single</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. divorced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. widowed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. declined/omit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. male</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. female</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Did you attend any school in the U.S.?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. no, ________________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. country attended school in ______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. What is the highest level of education you completed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0. never attended school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. elementary (grade completed: ______ )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. high school diploma</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(If no diploma, grade completed: ______ )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. college degree ______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. did not graduate: ______</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. graduate Studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. declined/omit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. What language do you use most often?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Hmong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. language ______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. N/A, omit, decline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T. What is your religion?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Shamanism/Animism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Christian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Atheist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U. ______________</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. decline, omit, N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**K. What language did your father first learn to speak?**
1. Green/Blue Hmong
2. White Hmong
3. Other:
L. language: __________

**V. What language did your mother first learn to speak?**
1. Green/Blue Hmong
2. White Hmong
3. Other:
W. language: __________

**M. What is the highest level of education your father completed?**
0. Never attended school
1. Elementary (Grade completed: ______
2. High School Diploma
   (If no diploma, grade completed: ______
3. College Degree ________
   Did not graduate: ______
4. Graduate Studies

**X. What is the highest level of education your mother completed?**
0. Never attended school
1. Elementary (Grade completed: ______
2. High School Diploma
   (If no diploma, grade completed: ______
3. College Degree ________
   Did not graduate: ______
4. Graduate Studies
5. omit/decline/don’t know

**Can you read, write, and speak in Hmong?**
Circle all that applies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Y. speak</th>
<th>0= NO 1= YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Z.</td>
<td>read</td>
<td>0= NO 1= YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AA.</td>
<td>write</td>
<td>0= NO 1= YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB.</td>
<td>all the above</td>
<td>0= NO 1= YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AL. How well do you speak in Hmong?**
1. very well (everyone understands me)
2. well (most people understand me)
3. good (I have to use some English words)
4. not good (I use lots of English with a few Hmong words)

**AC. What Hmong system do you speak, read, and write in?**
(Circle all that applies)
1. Hmong RPA (Txiv Plig Nyiaj Pov)
2. Hmong Pahawh (Niam Ntawv Yaj Soob Lwj)
3. Hmong Flower System (Ntawv Paj Ntaub)
4. Hmong Lucky System (Ntawv Koob Hmoov)
5. Other Hmong System:
AD: system name: _______________

**AM. How well do you read in Hmong?**
1. very well (books and stories)
2. well (letters from relatives/friends)
3. good (occasional sounding out )
4. not good (just a few words)

**AE. How well do you write in Hmong**
1. very well (books and stories)
2. well (letters to relatives/friends)
3. good (some words)
4. not good (uncomfortable with writing)

**AN. Who taught you to read and write in Hmong?**
1. self-taught
2. parents taught me
3. friends/relatives taught me
4. community-based program
5. church
6. high school
7. college
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AF. Do you listen to Hmong radio?</td>
<td>1. yes (ANSWER # AO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. no (SKIP #AO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AO. How often do you listen to Hmong radio?</td>
<td>1. Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG. Do you watch Hmong T.V.?</td>
<td>1. yes (ANSWER # AP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. no (SKIP #AP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AP. How often do you watch Hmong T.V.</td>
<td>1. Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Monthly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Once in a while</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How important is it for you to know how to speak, read, &amp; write in Hmong?</td>
<td>AH. Speak very important, somewhat, not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AI. Read very important, somewhat, not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AJ. Write very important, somewhat, not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AQ. Which statement best describes your feelings about being Hmong?</td>
<td>1. I love being Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I like being Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I am embarrassed to be Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I don’t want to be Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AK. Which statement best describes your marriage preference?</td>
<td>1. I will only marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. I will most likely marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. I am undecided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. I am least likely to marry a Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. I will never marry a Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I’m going to ask you to speak to me in Hmong now. Tell me one thing about the Hmong culture that makes you most proud to be Hmong.

Can you read the sentence in this box for me?

Peb tsev neeg nyiam mus ua si nram ntug dej haiw txwv txhua xyoo thaum lub 4 hlis ntuj.

Peb tsev neeg nyaam moog ua si nraag ntug dlej haiw txwv txhua xyoo thaum lub 4 hlis ntuj.

Please write the sentence below in the Hmong writing system you use.

My dad is sixty years old. He was a Hmong soldier during the Vietnam War.

______________________________________________________________________
<p>| |
|                                                                             |
|                                                                             |
|                                                                             |
|                                                                             |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AR. Do you have any children?</th>
<th>AW. What are their ages?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. yes</td>
<td>________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. no</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AS. What language do you use when speaking to your children?</th>
<th>AX. What language does your child/ren use to speak to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. English</td>
<td>1. English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. White Hmong</td>
<td>2. White Hmong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. other: AT: __________</td>
<td>4. other: AY: __________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. N/A</td>
<td>5. N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AU. How important is it for your children to know how to speak, read, and write in Hmong?</th>
<th>AZ. Do/Would you encourage your children to speak Hmong at home?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Speak very important, somewhat, not</td>
<td>1. yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Read very important, somewhat, not</td>
<td>2. no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Write very important, somewhat, not</td>
<td>3. N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. N/A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AV. What is your marriage preference for your child/ren?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I want my child/ren to only marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I highly encourage my child/ren to marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I am undecided about my child/ren’s marriage preference at this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I least likely want my children to marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I don’t want my child/ren to marry a Hmong person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I am looking for a few people to interview further for this research. If you are interested in volunteering to be interviewed about the Hmong language and culture, please provide your contact information so that you can be contacted for a face-to-face interview. **Please understand that providing me with your contact information does not guarantee an interview.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name: _____________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phone Number: ______________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: ______________________________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collector: ______________________

Digital Recorder: # __________

Thank you so much for helping me with my research and for taking this survey. If you would like to learn about the findings from this research, please provide me with your contact information:

NOTES:   

| Name:___________________________ |   |
| Email:_________________________ |   |
1) Do you think that the Hmong that you speak is different from the Hmong that your (parents, children, grandchildren, grandparents, etc.) speak?

Raws li koj xav, cov lus koj siv/hais niaj hnub nim no, nws puas txawv/los sis pauv ntawm cov lus koj niam thiab koj txiv nkawv (cov me nyuam, xeeb ntxwv) siv/hais?

If it is different, how is it different, and why do you think it is different?

Yog nws txawv lawm/los yog pauv lawm, ho yog txawv/pauv li cas lawm?

If it is not different, why do you think it has been able to stay the same?

Yog nws tsis tau pauv/txawv, koj xav tias yog vim li cas cov lus thiaj tseem nyob li qub?
2) What do you think would happen if a Hmong person did not learn how to speak Hmong?

Yog ib tug neeg hmoob nws tsis paub/txawj hais lus Hmoob, koj xav hais tias nws ho yuav nyob zoo li cas xwb?

3) What effect would that have on his/her life, as well as the lives of others in the Hmong community?

Vim nws tsis txawj hais nws hom lus, nws lub neej yuav pauv los yoq hloov mus li cas? Ua li cov neeg nyob koom zej koom zos nrog nws ho yuav xav li cas, thiab lawv cov neej puas yuav txawv txav li cas?

4) What do you do to make sure that you do not forget how to speak Hmong?

Koj ua li cas, koj thiaj li khaws tau txoj kev siv/hais lus Hmoob?

5) What do you do to make sure that your children do not forget how to speak Hmong?

Koj ho ua li cas/coj li cas koj cov me nyuam thiaj li yuav neo ntsoov siv/hais lus Hmoob?
6) What places in your city can you see Hmong in print?

Hauv lub zos koj nyob, koj puas pom cov ntawv Hmoob tshwm rau qhov twg thiab thaum twg? Xws li, koj puas pom neeg siv cov ntawv Hmoob?

7) What places in your city can you hear the Hmong language?

Nyob hauv lub zov koj nyob, ua li koj hnov neeg siv lus Hmoob thaum twg/nyob qhov twg xwb?

8) What places in your city can you see Hmong people?

Hauv zos koj nyob, koj pom Hmoob thaum twg/qhov twg?

9) What do you think your city can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong language alive and strong?

Koj xav tias koj lub zos yuav ua li cas thiaj li yuav pab khaws tau peb Hmoob cov lus kom tsis ploj thiab thiaj li yuav loj hlob tuaj?

10) What helped you to learn how to read and write in Hmong?

Koj ua li cas koj koj thiaj li kawm nyeem thiab sau ntawv Hmoob?
11) What helped you to maintain the Hmong language?

Koj ua li cas koj thiaj khaws thiab tseem siv tau cov lus Hmoob?

12) What do you think schools can do to help preserve and pass on the Hmong language to Hmong students?

Koj xav tias cov tsev kawm ntawv yuav ua dab tsi thiaj li yuav pab khaws tau peb cov lus hmoob rau cov tub ntxhais hmoob?

13) What do you think community based organizations can do to help preserve and pass on the Hmong language to Hmong students?

Koj ho xav tias cov koom haum ncig ncig zos ho yuav ua tau dab tsi los pab khaws thiab qhia cov lus Hmoob rau tsoom tub ntxhais Hmoob?

Cultural Maintenance Protocol

1) What makes you Hmong?

Dab tsi qhia tau hais tias koj yog Hmoob?

2) In what situations or occasions do you identify yourself as Hmong? Why?

When do you identify yourself as American? Why?
Thaum twg los lub sij hawm twg koj thiaj li lees paub tias koj yog
Hmoob thiab yog vim li cas? Thaum twg koj ho qhia/lees tias koj yog neeg Mes Kas? Vim li cas?

3) What Hmong values are most important to you? American values? Why?
Ntawm lub neej Hmoob, dab tsi muaj nuj nqis tshaj rau koj?
Ntawm lub neej Mes Kas, dab tsi ho muaj nuj nqis/tseem ceeb rau koj?
Vim li cas?

4) How would you identify the way that you live in terms of being mostly Hmong or mostly American or equally Hmong and American? Why?
Koj txoj kev ua neej nim no, koj xav tias koj yeej nyob li neeg Hmoob xwb, los koj twb dhau mus nyob lub neej zoo nkaus li Mes Kas lawm xwb, lo yog ib nrab zoo li Mes Kas ib nrab zoo li Hmoob? Yog vim li cas?

5) In your life, do you feel like you keep your Hmong culture?
Hauv koj lub neej, koj xav tias koj puas khaws tau kab li kev cai Hmoob?
6) If you do, what do you do to make sure that you keep your Hmong culture?

Yog koj tseem khaws tau kev cai Hmoob, koj ho ua li cas, koj thiaj li tseem khaws tau lub neej Hmoob thiab kev cai Hmoob?

7) How do you make sure that your children keep your Hmong culture?

Koj yuav ua li cas, koj cov me nyuam thiaj li yuav khaws tau lub neej hmoob?

8) If you do not, why do you think you are not keeping your Hmong culture?

Yog koj tsis khaws kev cai Hmoob thiab lub neej Hmoob lawm, yog vim li cas koj thiaj ho khaws tsis tau?

9) Do you think that the people of your community support the Hmong community by celebrating your culture? Why? Why not?

Koj puas xav tias cov neeg nyob koom zej koom zos pab txhawb/thiab tuaj koom Hmoob tej kev poj ua cia yawm ua tseg los yog tej koob tsheej?
10) What do you think the mainstream community can do to help the Hmong community keep the Hmong culture alive and strong?

*Cov neeg Mes Kas hauv zos no yuav ua li cas thiaj li pab tau Hmoob khaws lawv tej kev poj ua cia yawm ua tseg thiab txhawb kom Hmoob tej kev cai loj hlob thiab lub neej Hmoob muaj nyob mus?*

11) How often do you consult your parents or siblings about life decisions?

*Ua ntej koj yuav txiav txim siab ua ib yam dab tsi, koj puas mus nug koj niam/txiv, kwv tij etc.?*

12) How much influence do your parents have on your daily decision-making?

*Koj niam thiab txiv puas muaj feem cuam tshuam thiab pab koj txiav txim rau tej yam nyob hauv koj lub neej?*

13) How do you show respect to your parents, grandparents, or elders?

*Koj ua li cas thiaj li qhia tau rau koj niam/txiv, cov laus/hlob hais tias koj saib taus thiab hwm lawv?*
The questions in this Language and Cultural Maintenance Protocol were adapted from “Hmong Language and Cultural Maintenance in Merced City, California,” by A. Withers, 2003, Unpublished Masters Thesis, San Jose State University.
APPENDIX C: CONSENT FORM

December 26, 2014
Dear Participant:
I am working on my dissertation at California State University of Fresno, and have chosen to research the Hmong language, literacy, and cultural values of the Hmong in America. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are Hmong, and you fall within a defined age category and gender group. Please read this form and ask me any questions you have about the study before you agree to participate.

The collection of data will take place between December 2014 and January 2015 at the Hmong International New Year with the researcher in response to survey questions and face-to-face interview questions. Should you choose to participate, you will be asked about your perceptions about the Hmong language, literacy, and Hmong cultural or traditional values on a survey. This will only take you between 7-10 minutes.

The responses you give on the survey questions will be kept confidential, as well as any and all information I have about you. I will at no time allow for your identity to be found out by anyone except myself.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages as well.

This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures. Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your open-ended questionnaire in one locked file cabinet, and the actual survey without your name in a separate locked file cabinet. Only I will have the keys to the cabinets and the key to the names which corresponds to each component of the survey.

If you have any questions about this research please contact Vicky C. Xiong-Lor at (559)321-1273. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to “not participate” in this study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the study. You are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with California State University of Fresno or with any other participating institutions, agencies or persons.

You may keep this cover letter for your records. Thank you for your consideration of participating in this research.

Sincerely,

Vicky C. Xiong-Lor
**Agreement to Participate in Research**

**Responsible Investigator:** Vicky C. Xiong-Lor

**Title of Protocol:** Language and Culture Maintenance Protocol

You have been asked to participate in a research study investigating the importance of the maintenance of the Hmong language, literacy and cultural values in America. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are Hmong, you are within a defined age category and gender group.

You will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about your language use and your cultural beliefs and practices. The questionnaire will take about 7-10 minutes. You will also be asked to see if you are interested in participating in a face-to-face interview about your perceptions about language, literacy and cultural values and ways to maintain and pass them on to future generations. The collection of the data will take place in at the Hmong International New Year from December 2014 to January 2015. The researcher will be contacting you to arrange for the face-to-face interview should you be chosen.

The possible foreseeable risk in this research is emotional or psychological discomfort in expressing issues related to your language and culture. However, the benefits of participating in this research are numerous, and include a possible better understanding of yourself in terms of your language use and your culture. This research may also bring heightened awareness in others as to how to maintain not only Hmong language and culture, but also other languages and cultures as well. This research will benefit society in that it will help us understand those factors which seem to be linked to decline in native language and cultural maintenance, as well as factors which seem to point to the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

Although the results of this study may be published, no information that could identify you will be included. Your name will be kept strictly confidential. I will keep a key which corresponds to your interview and questionnaire in one locked box, and the actual interview and questionnaire without your name in a separate locked box. Only I will have the keys to the boxes and the key to the names which correspond to each interview and questionnaire.

No service of any kind, to which you are otherwise entitled, will be lost or jeopardized if you choose to “not participate” in the study. Your consent is being given voluntarily. You may refuse to participate in the entire study or in any part of the study. If you decide to participate in the study, you are free to withdraw at any time without any negative effect on your relations with California State University of Fresno or with any other participating institutions, agencies, or persons.

If you have any questions about this research please contact Vicky C. Xiong-Lor at (559) 321-1273. If I am not available, please leave a message, and I will contact you as soon as possible. At the time that you sign this consent form, you will receive a copy of it for your records, signed and dated by the investigator.

- The signature of a subject on this document indicates agreement to participate in the study.
- The signature of a researcher on this document indicates agreement to include the above named subject in the research and attestation that the subject has been fully informed of his or her rights.

Subject’s Signature ___________________________ Date ________________

Investigator’s Signature ___________________________ Date ________________
Non-Exclusive Distribution License
(to archive your thesis/dissertation electronically via the library’s eCollections database)

By submitting this license, you (the author or copyright holder) grant to Fresno State Digital Scholar the non-exclusive right to reproduce, translate (as defined in the next paragraph), and/or distribute your submission (including the abstract) worldwide in print and electronic format and in any medium, including but not limited to audio or video.

You agree that Fresno State may, without changing the content, translate the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation.

You also agree that the submission is your original work, and that you have the right to grant the rights contained in this license. You also represent that your submission does not, to the best of your knowledge, infringe upon anyone’s copyright.

If the submission reproduces material for which you do not hold copyright and that would not be considered fair use outside the copyright law, you represent that you have obtained the unrestricted permission of the copyright owner to grant Fresno State the rights required by this license, and that such third-party material is clearly identified and acknowledged within the text or content of the submission.

If the submission is based upon work that has been sponsored or supported by an agency or organization other than Fresno State, you represent that you have fulfilled any right of review or other obligations required by such contract or agreement.

Fresno State will clearly identify your name as the author or owner of the submission and will not make any alteration, other than as allowed by this license, to your submission. By typing your name and date in the fields below, you indicate your agreement to the terms of this distribution license.

Embargo options (fill box with an X).

- Make my thesis or dissertation available to eCollections immediately upon submission.
- Embargo my thesis or dissertation for a period of 2 years from date of graduation.
- Embargo my thesis or dissertation for a period of 5 years from date of graduation.

Vicky Chee Xiong-Lor

Type full name as it appears on submission

July 13, 2015

Date