

Asian American Youth Language Use: Perspectives Across Schools and Communities

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# Chapter 1

## Asian American Youth Language Use: Perspectives Across Schools and Communities

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Recent studies of Asian American youth language practices have presented compelling insights about the identities and migration experiences of young people of Asian descent. This chapter offers a detailed examination of the relationship between language use and select issues concerning Asian American youth, including social life, schooling, acculturation, and intergenerational relationships. Specifically, how do Asian American youth negotiate aspects of their migration experience through their language practices? And, what insights about race, ethnicity, class, and gender can be learned about migration and diaspora through a focus on youth language use? The chapter covers three main topics about the language practices of Asian American youth: identity, style, and stereotypes. The first portion of the chapter discusses performances of Asian American youth identity through language practices. Studies of bilingualism, heritage language learning, language socialization, and the role of language in intergenerational relationships are explored. Engagements with media, new media, and consumption offer further examples of how language use enables youth to make diasporic connections and to express aspects of language and culture in their everyday lives. Heritage language shift, in some cases an inevitable outcome of generational change, underscores the dynamic nature of languages and their usage in migration contexts. The next section delves into ethnographic case studies of “style,” a linguistic anthropological and sociolinguistic framework that foregrounds the everyday speech practices of Asian American youth. Youth perform regionally available styles of speaking as well as locally created, group-specific styles, along with varieties of English that provide exemplification not only of identity formation but also of gender, ethnicity, and race.

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The latter portion of the chapter is concerned with how Asian American youth language practices are received in the White public sphere. Stereotypes that Asian American youth contend with create expectations not only for academic achievement but also for language use. Youth of various class backgrounds negotiate ideologies about heritage languages and varieties of English differently, even within the same ethnic group. In this vein, variation within the category of “Asian American” will be examined to understand how language use may create social differences within as well as between ethnic groups. Ideologies of English monolingualism shape the ways in which youth manage ESL (English as a Second Language) and other language learning classes, the language choices they make during social time at school, and how peers, school faculty, and others regard and judge particular linguistic choices. Language choices that Asian American youth make thus not only shape their identities but also contribute to processes of racialization in school environments.

To explore the ways in which language use is linked to the identities and subjectivities of Asian American youth, research from several bodies of literature—including linguistic anthropology, international migration studies, and immigrant education—are discussed. Case studies of Asian American youth language practices in nonclassroom environments, including social time at school, with their families, and in their communities, will be a central focus. Looking across these domains, Asian American youth will be considered as social actors who make choices about language use that shape identity, community, and generational change. Select studies of Asian youth in the United Kingdom and Canada, as well as of Latino youth in the United States, provide additional ways of considering the language practices of Asian American youth. Taken together, the chapter considers how ideologies of language and culture that prevail in the lives of Asian American youth may shape their orientations toward their own language use as well as that of others, and how they manage linguistic challenges particular to migration and diaspora. It thus extends studies of immigrant education by considering how youth actively shape identities through language use while they also negotiate their subjectivity in schools and communities.

### **ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACHES TO YOUTH AND LANGUAGE**

Since 1965, when the United States began to solicit immigrants actively after decades of restrictive policies, social scientists have sought to understand how individuals and families of the “new immigration,” particularly those from Asia and Latin America, have built lives for themselves in America. Youth in the category “Asian American” are immigrants or children of immigrants from East Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific Islands. The category also includes young people whose ancestors immigrated before 1965, primarily from China, Japan, and in lesser numbers, from India and the Philippines. In a 2008 update to the 2000 Census (report CB08-FF.05), the U.S. Census Bureau estimates a population of 14.9 million

Asians (alone or in combination with other races). Although numerous aspects of culture, heritage, and language retention have been studied, relatively little attention has been paid to understanding everyday language use among youth of the new immigration. Rather, the predominant focus has been on intergenerational tension, feelings of displacement, and clashes of cultural values. Both in migration studies, which groups youth by generational categories of first, second, and 1.5 (referring to youth who migrated during late childhood or early adolescence), and in minority education studies, the focus is on how “immigrant” youth are culturally conflicted outsiders because of the disjuncture of their migration experience. At times this focus can be overwhelming, and it is also important to focus on the performative cultural and linguistic practices that youth use to create a sense of belonging.

Youth-centered perspectives on migration that consider them as more than simply “immigrants” can also be productive. A revision in terminology from *immigrant* to *diasporic* reorients focus from youth as subjects of assimilation to youth as agents who engage in everyday cultural and linguistic practices. Lukose (2007) argues that the concept of diaspora and insights from diaspora studies can productively complicate the otherizing status of “immigrant education” and problematize some of the underlying assumptions on which the U.S. education system is based. Considering the diasporic connections of second-generation youth is an important counterpoint to the more limited, relational connotations of the term *minority* in an educational context. Lam (2006) likewise advocates for an approach that extends beyond the terminology of *nation-state* and *immigrant* to consider diasporic connections that shape social and educational participation. She shifts focus from “minority” issues to a “transcultural” perspective that integrates a wider range of social and learning experiences. In doing so, she critiques “deficit” approaches in which culture is viewed as holistic in favor of a cultural affirmation model that takes into account diverse practices of youth (Lam, 2006, pp. 215–216).

Youth-centered approaches to Asian American language use can demonstrate how the cultural and linguistic choices young people make are linked to and shaped by different migration contexts. Considering diasporic youth as social actors can broaden the purview of questions beyond classic migration areas of intergenerational tension and entry into adulthood to the everyday mechanisms youth develop to handle changes linked to migration. About such adaptation, Bucholtz (2002) contends,

Rapid social change need not be experienced as dramatic or unsettling by the young people living through it . . . it is important to bear in mind that youth are as often the agents as much as the experiencers of cultural change. (p. 530)

Language use is a central arena through which youth enact identities, and understanding these practices in context can speak to broader migration concerns. Ethnographic studies of youth have emphasized the importance of looking at youth concerns in and of themselves rather than solely in relation to adult issues.

Ethnographic perspectives on the study of language use and migration can extend questions of retention and loss by looking at emic categories that youth use to organize their social lives. Long-term in situ observation, in addition to self-report, provides additional perspectives not available from survey and interview-based studies. Ethnographic approaches to youth language use demonstrate how language in context shapes meanings of race, class, and gender (Smitherman, 1999). Alim and Baugh (2007) demonstrate how schools position minority youth as speakers and the ways in which young people both challenge and work within linguistic constraints. Goodwin's (2006) extensive work on girls' identity construction through play during recess and after school illustrates the complex social negotiations that can occur between young people themselves. The ways in which girls verbally interact, take turns, and perform particular stances is shaped by, and shapes, meanings of gender and ethnicity. Also focusing on gender, Fordham (2008) discusses how youth use linguistic and material signifiers to index, or indirectly refer to, Black identities other than those of low-income Black neighborhoods. These and other studies of youth language use provide extensive insights about youth educational orientation and performance, social life, and engagements with popular culture.

Examinations of youth language use outside of formal pedagogical contexts can address central questions of migration and diaspora, including generational change, racial and ethnic formation, gender, and class. Informal environments—such as social spaces at school, time with peers, and family and community settings—are sites where youth can use language in creative and social ways. Models for research both inside and outside the classroom are offered by the field of “linguistic anthropology of education” (LAE), which includes nonpedagogical dimensions of youth education alongside formal classroom instruction (Wortham, 2008). LAE's focus on youth linguistic practices outside of pedagogical contexts, including social time at school, afterschool programs, and community-based organizations, emphasizes the importance of these spaces in youth lives as well as their linkages to more formal educational settings and tasks (Ball & Heath, 1993; Rymes, 2001; Vadeboncoeur, 2006). With its ethnographic focus, LAE can expand migration and immigrant education topics of language retention and loss to look at a range of context-specific uses of language, including language socialization, identity, and style. The following sections delve into these issues for Asian American youth.

### LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Linkages between language and identity can demonstrate not only youth affiliations and preferences but also the everyday tactics youth use to negotiate subjectivities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). In addition to self-report about language use, language-based studies of identity-making practices show how youth negotiate aspects of their migration experience through modalities such as bilingualism, heritage language use, code switching, language socialization, and translation. Linguistic dimensions of youth engagements with media, popular culture, and consumption

can show how youth connect to heritage languages as well as to other languages, and how these communicative forms play a role in social interactions with peers and family. Language shifts and changes in usage are a routine part of generational change in diaspora and can also speak to questions of acculturation and identity.

### Bilingualism and Heritage Languages

Studies of bilingualism among Asian Americans and other youth of the new immigration take both macro- and micro-level approaches to understanding the significance of speaking heritage languages and English. Migration studies explore the comparative bilingual abilities of first-, second-, and third-generation immigrants. In their “children of immigrants longitudinal study” (CILS) consisting of survey and interview data, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) consider English proficiency as a way of measuring acculturation. The rate at which second-generation youth acquire English is correlated with the same for their parents, and these measures are used to quantify acculturation. Based on youth ethnic identification and self-report, they conclude that English-speaking ability is an important component of youth identity. Their analysis of “selective acculturation” reveals that youth who “retain” their parents’ culture and language feel less of a generational clash than those “youths who have severed bonds with their past in the pursuit of acceptance by their native peers” (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, p. 274).

The role of bilingualism is also significant insofar as it aids immigrant families in entering and thriving in the labor market and participating more substantially in a multilingual global economy. Bilingualism is especially important to the transnational activities of the second generation (M. Levitt & Waters, 2002). The success of transnationalism relies heavily on heritage language retention, so much so that attachments to homelands may be renewed or curtailed based on the linguistic abilities of the second generation. Rumbaut (2002) argues that language retention and loss are important to understanding second-generation relationships to homelands and that bilingual ability is a key component of these connections. This is especially the case as scholars look past the second-generation to third-generation youth to assess the viability of social, economic, and political ties that their parents maintain to homelands (P. Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Bilingualism has also been noted to facilitate connections between teens and their parents and enables youth to take advantage of social connections in their ethnic communities (Zhou & Bankston, 1998).

Bilingualism can be useful in understanding how children learn cultural codes from their heritage culture as well as American society. Lee (2005) examines bilingualism among Hmong youth as a way of investigating their subjectivity as minority students. As they acquire English literacy, they also learn select aspects of American culture and codes. The teachers in Lee’s study seem to consider this socialization to be a part of the broader ESL mission. Lee (2005, p. 55) uses the term *Americanized* for those youth who have adopted these values and may be more particular about their ethnic identification, versus those “traditional” youth who are primarily 1.5

generation and more optimistic about their prospects in the United States. Looking at bilingualism among Latino youth, Zentella (1997) investigates intergenerational politics of bilingualism on *el bloque* among three generations of Puerto Ricans in New York City. She reports how a range of linguistic processes—language socialization, code switching, bilingualism, and language shift—are significant to shaping the identities of Latino youth. In addition to Spanish, Zentella also draws attention to youth use of New York City varieties of English and African American Vernacular English (AAVE).

Heritage language learning enables youth to develop linguistic proficiency and deepen connections with others in their language community, and Asian American youth have been documented in their efforts to learn Chinese, Japanese, and Korean (He & Xiao, 2008; Jo, 2001; Kondo-Brown, 2006). Those who are heritage language proficient vary in their ability to pass it along to their children, and such differences shape how Asian American youth regard their ethnic identification (Ching & Kung, 1997). The value placed on English also plays a role in bilingual practices and language learning. Song (2010) identifies Korean American communities' language ideologies that situate English as a cosmopolitan language that may be leveraged as a marketable commodity. Song contrasts families who migrate to the United States on a short-term basis for their children's education with long-term Korean immigrants. Examining the language ideologies and practices of these two groups, she interviews mothers who arrange for and assist their children in acquiring English proficiency. Although English is highly valued, the mothers express feelings of regret about children who have not learned Korean and thus cannot easily communicate with others in their Korean social networks. Code switching among Asian Americans provides further exemplification about the contexts and means by which speakers alternate between a heritage language and English. Speakers' use of two or more codes has been examined in several heritage languages, including Japanese (Ervin-Tripp, 1964; Kozasa, 2000), Korean (Kang, 2003; Lo, 1999; Shin & Milroy, 2000), Vietnamese (Klieffen, 2001; Tuc, 2003; Wolfram, Christian, & Hatfield, 1986), and Hawai'i Creole (Romaine, 1999). Code switching can also focus on how speakers alternate between nonheritage languages. For instance, Lo (1999) documents how Chinese Americans make use of Korean and AAVE.

Intergenerational studies of heritage language use can demonstrate the ways in which youth learn kinship terms and social structures linked to their heritage culture (Kang, 2003; Shin, 2005). Song (2009) investigates how Korean American children manipulate interpersonal terms of address that they are socialized into using. Youth choice about the use of Korean or English terms of address is demonstrated through the ways in which they manipulate respectful and familiar modes of address. Like other studies of language socialization (i.e., Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), Song traces how youth learn not only language but also social norms, gender relations, and a sense of self vis-à-vis others in a community setting. In a bilingual context, these norms may not translate across languages, and Song demonstrates the creativity that youth use to manage intergenerational and peer social relationships.



Providing another perspective on intergenerational communication, “language brokering” describes the process by which young people translate for older members of their communities. Language brokering and translation work position children and youth as active participants in the migration process (Orellana, Thorne, Chee, & Lam, 2001). Orellana (2009) describes the rewards as well as the challenges of this type of language work, as seemingly straightforward translation can quickly become complicated when youth are asked to communicate about sensitive topics, legal matters, and financial issues that typically do not involve children. Especially awkward are events such as parent–teacher conferences in which youth struggle to translate both positive and negative feedback about themselves, each of which poses a distinct difficulty. As they bridge the gap between adults in positions of authority and their immigrant parents, youth must negotiate power dynamics of a largely English-speaking White public sphere (Reynolds & Orellana, 2009). Tse (1996) documents this process for both Chinese American and Vietnamese American communities and notes that these youth translators differ from those in Latino communities. With the latter, youth English-speaking ability may not be accurately assessed by the school, even though these youth are vital to translation processes (Tse, 1995). Drawing attention to the largely unacknowledged work that youth do as translators and interpreters, Valdes (2003) contends that youth who may be labeled as “high risk” should be evaluated more closely with regard to their bilingual accomplishments to better understand the ways in which they may be “gifted.” These youth can inadvertently become involved in family matters concerning finance, the law, and their own education in ways that noninterpreter youth seldom do. Such linguistic practices shape the identities of Asian American and other diasporic youth.

Heritage languages and English varieties are linked to ethnic and racial identity (Kang & Lo, 2004), and ethnic identification and identity are negotiated through language choice (Fought, 2006; Heller, 1986). Foner (2002) regards language to be a part of ethnic identity that mediates intergenerational connections for second-generation youth. Looking at Asian American youth of different ethnicities, Kibria (2003) investigates youth relationships with their heritage culture and language. She contextualizes her study in a broader look at the racial and ethnic experiences of youth of the new immigration from Asia and Latin America to understand how youth become “ethnic Americans” or “racial minorities.” Kibria includes heritage language along with culture as part of what she calls “ethnic identity capital” to draw attention to differences of ethnic experiences among Asian American youth. Ethnic identity capital is a useful concept for considering how youth make choices about how and when to perform their heritage culture and language. Ethnic identity capital illustrates the agentive ways in which youth use language, along with other aspects of their heritage, to shape their racial and ethnic identities.

Heritage language use can illustrate processes of diasporic belonging and generational change. Kang (2009) explores this theme by studying discursive constructions of identity to differentiate between “ethnic groups” and “ethnic identity.” Looking at first-, second-, and 1.5-generation Korean American camp counselors, she discusses



how youth self-classify themselves and make judgments about others. Emphasizing the importance of locally inflected meanings of ethnicity, Kang notes the perceived disjuncture between “being” Korean at the camp and “feeling” Korean American through particular uses of language. Language use and ethnicity show how youth within an ethnic group connect with their specific heritage culture. Ek (2009) offers a case study of language and identity for a second-generation Latina young woman who is able to develop a distinct Guatemalan identity despite not identifying with dominant Mexican American/Chicana groups in her region. Ek discusses “multiple socializations,” including “Americanization” and “Mexicanization,” to which this Guatemalan teenager is subject and explores how this shapes her language choice and use. By choosing to use a Guatemalan variety of Spanish, she indexes her ethnic and national affiliation while also positioning herself as Latina in a school context where students of this background maintain cultural and linguistic values that at times conflict with school norms.

These studies underscore the centrality of heritage languages in the formation of diasporic youth identities. Asian American youth use their heritage languages to express a sense of belonging and connection to their heritage cultures as well as their communities. These language practices can also be linked to other aspects of social life, especially engagements with media and practices of consumption.

### **Youth Language Practices, Media, and Consumption**

Asian American youth engagements with media, consumption, and other aspects of popular culture are important tools for identity formation, and an eye toward language use in these realms can further understandings of diaspora and generational change. Gadsden (2008) emphasizes that youth engage with media in ways that shape their linguistic practices of story telling, literacy, and learning. About media-based language practices, she asserts, “Youth draw on and revise existing language and linguistic genres to construct their own language(s) and linguistic codes” (Gadsden, 2008, p. 51) and emphasizes that they come to bear on their experiences in school. Reyes (2007) examines how Southeast Asian American youth negotiate ethnic stereotypes through video production in an afterschool program in Philadelphia. This media-making activity is one through which youth explore their status as “the Other Asian” in ways that differentiate them from wealthier, higher-achieving Asian American youth. In this realm, Reyes contends that youth borrowings from AAVE are positive for youth who wish to create a more urban subjectivity. Linguistic elements drawn from hip-hop enable diasporic youth to create connections with other youth worldwide (Alim, Ibrahim, & Pennycook, 2009). For instance, youth of Latin American descent in Montreal use hip-hop to connect with Canadian youth as well as those in Latin America, thus emphasizing the potential of linguistic and expressive culture in shaping diasporic identities (Sarkar & Winer, 2006).

Youth sustain linguistic connections with heritage languages through their engagements with media. Looking at heritage language media consumption, Rubinstein-Ávila (2007) presents a case of a teenage Dominican American girl who

uses her transnational connections to keep her interest in Spanish language media active, including viewing and discussing telenovelas (Spanish language soap operas) as well as books about the Dominican Republic. In my investigation of media-based language practices, I document how youth engage with Bollywood films in everyday peer interactions as well as intergenerational relationships (Shankar, 2009). Ethnographic research with Desi teens in Queens, New York, and Silicon Valley, California, illustrates how these youth incorporate Hindi film dialogue into their peer interactions and how family viewing practices facilitate bilingualism between generations. Even youth whose heritage language is not Hindi may watch subtitled films and turn to their parents and grandparents for translation assistance. Memorable lines from popular films offer boys and girls prescribed ways to flirt with one another, and youth use “*filmi*” (a Hindi word referring to conventions and content of Bollywood films) styles of speaking, such as those linked to villains, heroes, or other archetypal characters to create jokes and humorous utterances among themselves. During the film viewings, youth speak in Hindi, Punjabi, and other heritage languages as well as English with their parents and grandparents. These language practices provide a more complex sense of how Desi youth use Bollywood as a cultural and linguistic resource in constructing identities.

New media, especially online communities, offer multilingual domains for youth that may not be easily found in their everyday lives. Youth can participate in online social environments that their schools may not provide and use them as alternative means of identification and socializing (McGinnis, Goodstein-Stolzenberg, & Costa Saliani, 2007). Lam (2004) documents Asian American youth affiliations with particular online cultures in which they create linguistic networks that surpass those of their school and communities. She describes ways in which Chinese immigrant teenagers acquire English to connect with a global anime youth culture in ways that transcend mainstream American language practices. Lam and Rosario-Ramos (2009) also investigate how Chinese American youth create linguistic resources to develop social relationships and networks through instant messaging (IM). Making connections with linguistic communities elsewhere, especially through a “wider migrant diaspora,” shapes self-presentation and identity for youth in the United States (Lam & Rosario-Ramos, 2009, p. 187). Similarly, Yi’s (2009) investigation of Korean American teenagers’ online activities reveals that youth participants use a mix of English and Korean to discuss both Korean and American cultural preferences and practices. These cases demonstrate how first- and second-generation Asian American youth use online spaces such as personal profiles and social networking sites to maintain linguistic connections with youth elsewhere.

Like media, consumption is another fertile area in which to examine diasporic youth language practices, especially how verbal and material cultures intersect in youth lives. Although it has been widely argued that consumption is an integral part of youth culture and of diaspora, the specific ways in which it is linguistically informed in the context of diasporic youth invites more detailed examination. Looking beyond traditional areas of ethnic consumption can reveal intergenerational

engagements with a wide range of material forms. Among Desi youth and their families in Silicon Valley, I document a process I call “metaconsumption,” which refers to forms of talk that enable teenagers and their families to create and circulate narratives about objects they may own or wish to own (Shankar, 2006). High-end cars, sound systems, and other objects are highly valued in these communities, and the ways in which teens affiliate with them through verbal practices can confer status and prestige. Especially noteworthy is the intergenerational nature of such values, and how youth as well as their parents collaborate about choices and jointly participate in consumption practices. The ways in which Desi youth and their families create and circulate verbal narratives about material culture provide a shared practice that challenges the notion that intergenerational conflict is the dominant relationship dynamic in a migration situation. Rather than considering material and linguistic investment in these objects to simply be a sign of assimilation, I consider how they allow Desi teens and their families to become further socially and linguistically invested in their own tightly knit ethnic communities.

In all these cases, language use is an integral part of how youth create identities and connections with their communities. Tools such as media allow youth to participate in language communities beyond those available to them in their everyday lives. Consumption of both media and material culture allow youth to mediate intergenerational relationships and forge relationships in their immediate as well as broader diasporic communities. Another relevant dimension of language use is heritage language shift and the transition to English and other languages.

### **Heritage Language Shift and Loss**

In as much as heritage language use and bilingualism are important aspects of Asian American youth language use, so too are processes of heritage language shift and loss. Decades of assimilation research have examined how immigrants retain or lose aspects of their heritage culture and language while acquiring new social modes and greater use of American English. Although assimilation is still a dominant theoretical framework, recent migration studies have veered away from straight-line, ethnocentric models in which immigrants are thought to relinquish all aspects of their heritage language and culture in favor of understanding it as a selective process in which individuals choose particular aspects of American culture. In her work on South Asian American youth, Gibson (1988) calls this model “multilinear acculturation” and argues that youth selectively adopt aspects of American culture and language while retaining valued elements from their heritage culture and language (see also Gibson & Ogbu, 1991). Gibson applies this approach in examining South Asian American teenagers of Sikh heritage in California. In her study, Sikh youth are able to participate in their school activities while also maintaining an active religious and cultural life in their communities.

Youth heritage language use is linked to processes of linguistic assimilation, which can occur differently according to socioeconomic status. Alba and Nee’s (2003) “segmented assimilation” builds on Gibson’s approach and suggests a number of

outcomes for how immigrants may become new Americans. They identify several assimilation trajectories in which heritage language is a variable that may be lost or retained, and assert that language is a significant component of the assimilation process. Either bilingualism or heritage language loss is the likely outcome of generational change; the latter, which they call “full linguistic acculturation,” is a near inevitability for third-generation and some second-generation youth (Alba & Nee 2003, p. 219).

Scholars have examined processes of language shift as speakers move generationally from being bilingual to monolingual English speakers (Shridhar, 1988). The heritage language interference prevalent in first-generation youth may not carry over between generations (Mendoza-Denton & Iwai, 1993). Ng, Lee, and Pak (2007, p. 107) indicate that language loss and generational differences in heritage language-speaking abilities may have “negative effects on family relations” because of differences in acculturation. Heritage language loss generally occurs within three generations because of pressures surrounding assimilation, including “linguistic inferiority internalized by minority individuals” (Ng et al., 2007, p. 107), among other factors such as building relationships with other English speakers and a monolingual English public sphere. Despite this trend, linguistic assimilation may not occur by the third generation because transnational ties and new immigrant arrivals can change patterns of language transmission and shift (Tse, 2001). Dicker (2006) demonstrates that for Dominican Americans who live in Washington Heights in New York City and maintain ties with their homeland, cultural and linguistic orientation can vary from typical patterns. The young Dominican Americans in her study enjoy Hispanic music, media, and being practicing bilinguals with family and friends. Dicker’s (2006, p. 715) case shows how transnational ties of Dominican Americans disrupt expected language shift.

Other perspectives illustrate how cultural changes that affect youth can be traced through subtle shifts in language. Duranti and Reynolds (2009) study intergenerational differences in linguistic ability and assert that 1.5-generation Samoan youth are the most balanced bilinguals of Samoan and English. They look at the social norms that inform language choice and note that children prefer to choose the code they speak and resent being “forced” to use one or the other. Pronunciation, especially important in distinguishing “good” from “bad” Samoan language, can vary according to English fluency. They thus illustrate how subtle cultural changes occur through linguistic shift; in this case, a “child’s point of view” not common in Samoan culture is developed and exercised through the adoption of English kinship terms in favor of traditional Samoan “*matai*” titles and proper names (Duranti & Reynolds, 2009, p. 250).

Asian American youth experience linguistic acculturation in different ways, and heritage language shift and loss can be an emotional process for youth. In her examination of the loss of heritage languages among Asian American youth, Hinton (2009) counters the xenophobic sentiment that immigrants refuse to learn English. Through 250-plus language “autobiographies,” Hinton explores the issues youth manage regarding their heritage languages, including learning English

through ESL, “language rejection” due to accent discrimination and heritage language ridicule from non-Asian American peers, and the gradual loss of heritage language. Not only does this process fill some youth with regret, but it also forms the basis of intergenerational communication difficulties and criticism from relatives and community members. Hinton’s research also indicates that youth may be embarrassed about their heritage language use until they reach college and realize their desire to be fluent in it. Ultimately, many of these youth struggle to reconcile what appear to be conflicted aspects of their identity due to the process of heritage language loss.

In these ways, heritage language use and bilingual practices are an integral part of understanding identity for Asian American youth. These language practices can demonstrate ethnic identity formation, generational shifts, and community membership for youth. Language-based practices of media and consumption extend and expand the ways in which youth use their heritage languages to connect with their heritage cultures and with local and diasporic communities. Heritage language shifts tell another part of this story and trace how youth create and manage linguistic identities differently than their parents and other adults in their communities. Some youth regret not being able to speak their heritage language, whereas others use varieties of English and distinct styles that reflect aspects of their ethnic and racial identity.

### STYLES OF SPEAKING AND RACIALIZATION

Just as heritage language use and aspects of bilingualism inform Asian American youth identities, style is another perspective from which to understand how youth negotiate linguistic aspects of the migration experience. Style draws attention to socially relevant ways in which speakers use phonetic, lexical, and other linguistic resources to create distinctive ways of speaking (Eckert, 2008; Irvine, 2001; Woolard, 2008). Coupland (2007) discusses style as a type of sociolinguistic variation that indexes particular social values and one that draws attention to the social judgments that people attach to them. Expanding this definition, linguistic anthropological understandings of style situate variation in the context of other cultural practices. Style draws attention to how diasporic youth regard heritage languages and varieties of English, and how these choices can be linked to clothing, social cliques, musical preferences, and other relevant aspects of youth culture (Eckert, 2000).

Style complements the youth-centered approach taken here because it draws attention to everyday performances of language. Beyond documenting whether or not youth use heritage languages, style is a way of understanding how youth perform locally recognizable identities that inform regional meanings of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. In this vein, considering not only heritage language use but also how youth use varieties and styles of English is a relevant component of understanding youth in migration contexts. Looking at youth in the United Kingdom, Hewitt (1986) identifies racially coded talk as a way youth perform ethnicity by using locally available styles. Youth enact Caribbean and South Asian identities by using certain language varieties—a process that underscores the fluidity of language as a resource in constructing diasporic identities.

Concerned with similar themes, Rampton's (1995) sociolinguistic study of language practices among youth of South Asian and Caribbean descent documents and analyzes microinteractions that occur between youth, especially their ethnically marked performances. Rampton offers the concept of "crossing" as a way to understand how youth inhabit and perform styles not usually linked with their own ethnicity so that they may gain membership into particular speech communities. Crossing, passing, and appropriation are all ways in which speakers use styles typical of other language communities. Rampton (2006) further explores these themes by looking at how youth speech practices push class boundaries and index regional social values. South Asian and Caribbean youth adopt distinctive accents and ways of speaking in their peer groups. Locally prevalent styles of "posh" and "cockney" serve as resources for youth as they aim to construct socially recognizable selves and identities.

Looking at hybridity is another way of understanding how youth construct ethnic identities and styles from language practices, and useful examples can be found in work on Asians in the United Kingdom. Building on research about diasporic Asian language use in the United Kingdom that looks at adult language use and community building (Saxena, 1994, 2000; Wei, 1994), studies of youth have focused on connections between language practices and ethnic formation. Harris's (2006) research on the language practices of "Brasians" or British South Asians in the late 1990s substantively examines linkages between language use and new ethnicities. Harris extends this paradigm—which itself critiques earlier cultural studies to formulate a less essentialist approach to ethnicity—to consider language use among Punjabi- and Gujarati-speaking youth in the United Kingdom. Linkages between language choice and ethnic identification are examined through analysis of recorded speech and interviews to present empirically grounded analyses of hybridity and change for youth in this diasporic location.

Also concerned with language and ethnicity, Baumann (1996, p. 47) notes how South Asian men and women in Southall use different greeting styles and lexical items from "Indian-English" and "Afro-American or Caribbean" English, and how their children adopt distinct styles and accents from West London in their social interactions with one another. Baumann (1996, p. 155) also describes "*Southalli*," a Southall language variety that combines Punjabi, Urdu, and Hindi; in contrast, "pure" Punjabi can both draw respect as well as ridicule for its "*pindhu*" or "peasant" connotations. Being "*bilati*" or a South Asian living in Britain, then, is indexed by use of this language variety, which Baumann's interviewees note as being recognizable in India as well as in the United Kingdom.

Examples of style from studies of Latinos also illustrate how youth use heritage languages as well as English to affiliate with social groups and claim social distinction in school settings. Bailey (2001) documents the multiple linguistic forms youth use from English and Spanish to construct their identities. He challenges the perceived uniformity of the category of African American by drawing attention to the linguistic heterogeneity of Spanish-speaking youth who identify as Hispanic, American,



and African American. Youth construct “non-White” linguistic identities by drawing on African American English and mocking White English forms, as well as by performing “non-Black” identities by claiming Spanish and distinguishing themselves from African Americans. Bailey (2001, p. 214) demonstrates how this occurs through everyday talk that enables Dominican American teenagers to differentiate themselves from one another and challenge a White linguistic hegemony.

Investigating the language practices of Latina gang girls, Mendoza-Denton’s (2008) fine-grained sociolinguistic study couples linguistic constructions of style with material expressions, such as distinctive makeup and photographs that circulate among gang girls. She notes stylistic differences in phonology and documents how phonetic differences in the Spanish and English speech of rival Norteño and Sureño gangs are readily recognizable to each other and serve as further markers of group membership and affiliation.

Youth also use varieties of English to construct styles; indeed, the use of varieties of English is a significant aspect of understanding Asian American language use (Lo & Reyes, 2009). AAVE has been shown to be a vital resource for Asian American youth constructions of style. Lee (2005) observes that “Americanized” youth in her study adopt AAVE as a way of performing a sense of belonging and differentiate themselves from more newly arrived youth. Reyes (2009) links language and racialization by observing how Southeast Asian American youth use elements of AAVE to participate in an urban youth style. Youth use features of this language to create distinctive identities that index meanings differently for certain speakers and listeners. Whereas adults may more greatly value Mainstream American English, youth place a premium on using AAVE slang terms such as *aite* (“all right”) and *na mean* (“do you know what I mean”) correctly among themselves. Through successful performances and recognitions, these urban Asian American youth participate in their racial formation by linguistically affiliating with African Americans. Similarly, Chun (2001) looks at how language indexes racial meaning and how youth use racially marked varieties of language in their performances of identity. Chun examines how some Asian American youth appropriate AAVE terms such as *whitey* (White person) and *boody* (booty) to index an urban youth culture. Using this language variety enables these youth to perform aspects of their identity, but as Chun notes, not necessarily to affiliate with African Americans or Black subjectivity.

Youth use of particular English language varieties can also illustrate stylistic differences within an ethnic group. In her research with Laotian American youth in Northern California, Bucholtz (2009) follows how two teenage girls each use English to form affiliations with different racially marked social groups at school. Both girls are aware of the local, gang-related stereotypes about Laotian Americans, and each creates a different strategy to cope with not being a “model minority.” Bucholtz illustrates how style both creates and exploits linguistic stereotypes and traces the linguistic styles and social affiliations of two girls, “Nikki” and “Ada.” Nikki seeks membership into African American social circles and accordingly uses resources from AAVE to perform in-group membership. In contrast, Ada uses hypercorrect English

to affiliate herself with White nerds and to distance herself from what she considers to be the negative connotations of her ethnic group. Although Nikki's linguistic style challenges the model minority stereotype, Ada's attempts position her closer to it and away from the prevalent gang-based image. Bucholtz also notes that bivalency, or simultaneous membership in more than one linguistic community, allows these teens to participate in multiple linguistically organized speech communities rather than being contained to one. Such a distinction is helpful to illustrate how Asian American youth may move between different social groups and speech communities at school and in their communities.

### **Desi Teens: A Case Study in Style**

Language use can help illustrate how differences within an ethnic group become crystallized into socially popular and marginal youth social cliques. In my research on Desi (South Asian American) teens, I look at styles of language as a lens to broader processes of racial and gender formation (Shankar, 2008b). I investigate the class-informed differences that separate cliques of "FOBs" (Fresh off the Boat) from "popular" teens in a diverse Silicon Valley high school.<sup>1</sup> Language use is a key social differentiator among teens within this ethnic group. Whereas some cliques of popular Desi teens only speak English at school, other cliques of socially marginalized second-generation youth called FOBs use Punjabi and Hindi during their social time at school. Even among teens who can speak their heritage language, differences emerge between popular teens who opt to only speak English and FOBby teens who choose to incorporate Punjabi and Hindi in their conversations with one another.

In their constructions of style, speakers in each clique choose distinctive resources from language varieties to index locally relevant constructions of diasporic identity and group belonging. FOBs draw linguistic elements from Punjabi, Hindi, and varieties of English, including hip-hop language and California slang to construct styles that provide a sense of solidarity in an otherwise alienating school environment. The varieties of English each group uses not only overlap but also vary enough for one group to distinguish itself from the other. Popular Desi teens use "Valley Girl" and types of regional California slang and avoid profanity and other language that would be considered "marked" or differing from school norms. Popular style relies heavily on cultural and linguistic attributes that are desirable and preferred in a school context, and such choices are paired with youth participation in school events, minimal profanity use, and rarely speaking a heritage language at school; clothing and comportment also complement these choices. FOBs, in contrast, base their styles more heavily on gang culture prevalent in their neighborhoods and incorporate linguistic elements that are dispreferred in a high school environment. They construct styles using lexical and phonetic elements from hip-hop, gang terminology, and profanity from Punjabi and English.

The content of specific styles undoubtedly vary as different speakers perform them, but the ways in which they index locally relevant values illustrate connections

between language, race, and class for Desi youth. Youth who perform FOB styles index their working-class neighborhoods and to the blue-collar jobs that their parents hold; they are socially marginalized in the school and tend to not be as academically successful as their popular peers from upper-middle-class families. This latter group generally has the advantage of their parents' advocacy in schools, and their interactional styles mirror those of the wealthy residential communities and neighborhoods in which they live. FOBby teens construct styles that display their displeasure about the school, and boys openly perform "tough language" (see Eckert, 2000) within earshot of school faculty.

One FOB clique that consisted mostly of boys regularly discussed fights they had witnessed, participated in, or heard about through school gossip. A distinctive feature of the way boys talk about fights is that they consistently claim a position of power and victory for themselves. In describing events that they witnessed, boys were sure to indicate that they would have handled altercations better than those who lost. In one exchange, 16-year-old Harbinder spoke to his friends about a fight he had witnessed. Routinely engaging in fights himself, Harbinder expressed notable disdain for the way one boy in the fight carried himself. He exclaimed, "Smoky beat the shit out of his punk ass. That boo was cryin' and shit." Harbinder's use of the term "boo," usually an affectionate term used for a significant other, is here used to underscore the lack of toughness displayed by the boy who was beaten. Through his use of profanity, Harbinder offers his negative judgment of the victim's stance and positions himself as someone who would have handled the situation very differently.

In this example, styles of speaking are linked to class-based processes of racialization. Harbinder's toughness makes him and his FOB friends racially marked and positions these Desi youth with other working-class Latinos and Vietnamese American teens at their school. Their tough language practices make them stand out in comparison with their popular peers. In this case, as with the others discussed in this section, style can draw attention to how language use is linked to racialization for diasporic youth, including how those within the same ethnic group may be racialized differently. Racialization can be further understood by examining language practices in the context of ideologies and stereotypes.

### STEREOTYPES, LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES, AND THE WHITE PUBLIC SPHERE

Asian American youth contend with numerous stereotypes in schools that have an impact on their educational expectations, social positioning, and language choices. Although introduced decades ago, the model minority stereotype has persisted in shaping experiences of schooling for Asian American youth. The stereotype developed subsequent to its introduction in 1966, when *U.S. News and World Report* magazine and the *New York Times* both featured major articles identifying Asian Americans, especially Chinese and Japanese Americans, as economically self-sufficient and driven in terms of education and social adaptability. Critics of this

stereotype argue that this characterization not only failed to account for the diversity within this population but also positioned Asian Americans against other minority groups considered to be a social and economic problem for the U.S. government, especially African Americans and some Latinos (Prashad, 2000).

Despite its sensationalist underpinnings, the model minority stereotype has endured in part because many who answered America's call for educated professionals came from Asia and were able to enter the American job market in medicine, law, engineering, and other white-collar professions. In 1965, an earlier quota system that had limited immigration from certain countries was replaced by the Hart-Cellar Act, which set a quota of 20,000 immigrants from each country and outlined a system of preferred categories for immigration, including highly skilled labor that the United States needed, as well as family unification. This resulted in a rapid and substantial growth of immigrants from Asia, nearly 7 million between 1970 and 2000; contemporary immigration from Asia is largely family sponsored (80%) or employer sponsored (20%; Zhou, 2004, p. 36). This socioeconomic status differs starkly from earlier in the century when Asian immigrants held predominantly blue-collar jobs in the service industry, as farmers, or worked on railroads. Because of this shift from blue collar to professional, and because many Asian Americans have achieved considerable socioeconomic success, the stereotype continues to be embraced by some Asian Americans while it also persists in the American educational system.

### **Youth and the Model Minority Stereotype**

Recent research has illustrated the negative effects of the model minority stereotype for youth in educational and social environments. Lee (1996) has extensively studied how it creates undue pressure for those youth poised to meet its expectations and poses a host of problems for those who cannot perform at this elevated level. Students suffer at the hands of this stereotype, especially when they do not accomplish the high standards associated with the term (Lee, 2004, p. 123). Inkelas's (2006, p. 14) study of higher education challenges the "whiz kid" stereotype plaguing Asian American youth and suggests that casting Asian Americans as "success stories" can obscure the real educational challenges that some of them face. In their research on Asian American youth, Zhou and Lee (2004, p. 8) distinguish between second-generation youth who grow up in affluent middle-class suburbs and maintain little contact with coethnics in urban enclaves, and those who live in urban ethnic communities. They report that Asian American parents may push their children to perform academically and may overemphasize education over leisure, and this is especially the case for upper-middle-class youth (Zhou & Lee, 2004, p. 15). Zhou and Lee are particularly concerned with the disjuncture between how youth see themselves versus how outsiders view them as a group. In this vein, the model minority myth has kept them from being considered "normal" in an educational context.

Understanding the diversity of students who inhabit the ethnically and linguistically varied category of "Asian American" has led to critiques of the model minority stereotype and a more careful consideration of the needs of at-risk Asian American

youth (Lee & Kumashiro, 2005). Disaggregating the category of “Asian American” into smaller groups is one way to complicate expectations and performances. Some Asian American youth—especially refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia or lower socioeconomic groups such as Hmong and Pacific Islanders—may not be able to academically perform as well as some of their peers from East and South Asia (Ima, 1995). Even within populations that are thought to be high-achieving, individual case studies show that this may not always be the case. Lew (2004) follows a cohort of second-generation Korean American youth who have dropped out of their New York City high schools. Like the African American youth in Fordham’s (2008) work, these dropouts also associate “success” with “acting White” and relate their own challenging experiences with Blackness. Yet their model minority status complicates any simple alignment, and Lew indicates that aspects of their ethnic background facilitate social mobility in ways not available to many Black urban youth. Korean dropouts are nonetheless well aware of how they differ from affluent, high-achieving Korean American students (Lew, 2004, p. 318). This heterogeneity is a reminder of the variance that exists among youth within the same ethnic group, and that class and other differences require more nuanced attention. A look at language practices in conjunction with the model minority stereotype will expand this inquiry.

### **Language Ideologies and English Monolingualism**

Meanings linked to languages and their contexts of use vary according to diasporic community, and may also differ from dominant social institutions such as schools. Language ideologies are important because they can draw attention to historical and political economic dimensions of Asian American youth language use. Language ideologies about heritage languages and English shape youth language use in migration contexts. Language ideologies refer to implicit and explicit ideas about languages and language use and can shape speakers’ dispositions about and choices surrounding language varieties and styles (Schieffelin, Woolard, & Kroskrity, 1998). Ideologies of language travel with speakers, and the valuation of heritage languages and English, as well as norms of language use, are particular to each population. Language ideologies can also be transfigured across transnational contexts (Park, 2009), and local norms can further complicate dynamics of heritage language use in schools.

In their schools, Asian American youth negotiate bilingualism and heritage language use in the context of the monolingual English public sphere. The White public sphere privileges English monolingualism and heritage languages can be viewed as inferior to English. Hill (2008) has written extensively about a variety of discriminatory language she calls “mock Spanish” and acts as a vehicle for prejudice against Latinos. Hill contends that Spanish malapropisms and lexical misuse are ways that non-Spanish speakers maintain power in a White public sphere. Likewise, Urciuoli (1999) describes a similar dynamic in her research with Puerto Rican communities in New York City. Although Spanish may be the preferred language for speakers, those outside the community can perceive it negatively. Urciuoli makes the

distinction between how Spanish language use, along with marked displays of culture, may racialize speakers negatively, whereas English use maintains a nonthreatening sense of ethnicity. Zentella (1997) offers similar observations of the challenges of Spanish English youth bilingualism in the context of the English Only movement (see also Santa Ana, 2005). Bilingualism thus creates dynamics of belonging and exclusion at home and school respectively, even though it is an important social tool for young people (Hakuta, 1986).

Research on language use in schools demonstrates that certain languages and language varieties are “marked” and stand out compared with unmarked varieties that operate as unspoken standards or norms (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Mainstream American English (MAE) prevails in schools as an unmarked variety, making some other varieties of English, along with heritage languages, marked and contradictory to school expectations. Benjamin Bailey (2007) documents the reception of bilingual language practices of Dominican American teenagers in schools. Youth use Spanish in their close friendships at school and consider it a positive aspect of their identity. These speech practices, however, can be negatively judged in a school context that privileges English. Coupled with the already low expectations of these Latino youth, Spanish language practices can be viewed as further evidence of youth disinterest in school and inability to competently speak English. Like other Latino youth, those in Bailey’s study are often caught between their own linguistic practices and the judgments about them, about which they may not be aware. In contrast, the Latina gang girls in Mendoza-Denton’s (2008) research are well aware of their social and linguistic marginality. Speaking Spanish can be a way of demonstrating insider membership to fellow members of a gang, whereas poetry written and circulated in English and Spanish is an important linguistic tool that these Latina girls use to cope with their challenging lives.

Research among Desi (South Asian American) teens in Silicon Valley high schools investigates how socioeconomic variance within this group differently shapes their social and linguistic practices at school (Shankar, 2008a). The prominent success of some Desis in the Silicon Valley high-tech industry obscures the working-class struggles of others in this ethnic group, and this divide is evident in the ways in which Desi teenagers negotiate expectations placed on them in high school. Upper-middle-class teens experience model minority pressure to excel from parents, school faculty, and peers, whereas working-class youth can be criticized and marginalized for academic performances that may fall short of meeting the stereotype. In both cases, Desi youth have a difficult time managing the inflated expectations placed on them as Asian Americans. Despite the tremendous diversity in this Northern California high school, differences expressed outside the confines of “multicultural” and “international” day celebrations become marked, racializing discourses (Shankar, 2004). Norms of speaking MAE are maintained not only by school faculty and teachers but also by popular Desi youth. Popular Desi teens uphold the model minority expectations of English monolingualism and speak MAE because it benefits their academic goals and participation in school activities. FOBby teens, however,



can draw the unwanted attention of faculty and teachers who can regard their heritage language use in schools as evidence that they may not speak English well. Like their Latino peers, Desi youth who speak their heritage language in school are often overlooked by faculty for school enrichment activities and leadership positions.

These cases demonstrate how class and language use together influence processes of racialization for diasporic youth. The explicit focus on language practices provides further exemplification about how youth negotiate stereotypes and expectations, and how some youth are more advantageously positioned to do so than others. These dynamics can also persist in ESL classrooms and other contexts of English language learning.

### **English as a Second Language**

The process of English language learning reveals the fraught relationship between heritage languages and English use for youth. Studies of immigrant education have extensively examined pedagogical and social dimensions of language learning in ESL, English Language Learning, and bilingual education programs. These studies consider how formal learning environments affect academic success and student feelings of inclusion and belonging in a school environment for Asian American youth (Louie, 2005). Since the 1974 Supreme Court case of *Lau v. Nichols*, U.S. schools have been required to provide an education to non-English speaking students equal to that of fluent English speakers. Recent state-level policies, such as California's proposition 227, which did away with bilingual education, have worked against English Language Learners (Gándara, Moran, & Garcia, 2004).

Studies of ESL and bilingual education programs indicate that despite the prevalence of seemingly progressive ideologies such as multiculturalism, school teachers and faculty may not take such a pluralistic approach in calibrating their expectations of how immigrant youth should assimilate culturally and especially linguistically (see, e.g., Fine, Jaffe-Walter, Pedraza, Futch, & Stoudt, 2007; García, 2009; Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, & Asato, 2000). Studies of literacy practices document the challenges and pitfalls for Asian Americans learning English (Chiang & Schmida, 1999; Kliefgen, 2001), and this hardship is especially pronounced for Asian American youth from working-class and at-risk groups, including Hmong Americans (Weinstein-Shr, 1993), Khmer (Hardman, 1998; Needham, 2003; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002), Laotian Americans (Fu, 1995), and Samoan Americans (Duranti & Reynolds, 2009; Reynolds, 1995).

English learning environments can bring to the fore another prejudice that Asian American youth must manage, namely, the "forever foreigner" stereotype. Tuan's (1998) influential formulation contrasts this outsider position with "honorary White," underscoring the difficulty of creating positive Asian American identities. Such challenges are highlighted in ESL classes, where learning English and transitioning from ESL to mainstream English classes can be a stigmatizing social experience for some youth. Talmy (2009) notes that ESL students may be permanently

labeled “linguistic Others” because of the attitudes toward them. Although the pedagogy and instruction of the course reifies their status as forever foreigners, students resist judgments that label them “FOB.” Some students’ attempts to shed this pejorative label take the form of transferring it to a peer whom they believe better exemplifies the term’s negative connotations. By doing so, some students reproduce the linguistic discrimination from which they themselves suffer. Asian American youth are not alone in this marginalization. Latino youth experience difficulties as well, and teachers can compare ESL students with those in special education and suggest that because students struggle with English, they may also have trouble speaking and writing in Spanish (Wortham, Mortimer, & Allard, 2009, p. 398). Cammarota (2004) identifies the ways in which Latino youth become disinterested in their education because of problems at school, issues with language, and cultural differences between the home and school environments. Boys and girls manage these challenges differently, and both contest marginalization through particular stances against the school. All these cases emphasize the difficulties youth face in managing stereotypes that set particular expectations for them, and in using language to express identity and belonging in a White public sphere that may not accommodate such practices.

### **DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This review of Asian American youth language practices has sought to offer alternative ways of considering familiar questions of identity, school orientations, and generational change by foregrounding language use. Looking at language use in the context of other cultural and educational practices shows its central role in shaping youth ethnic identities and racial subjectivities. Youth make choices about their heritage language and varieties of English in their everyday practices of bilingualism, code switching, and engagements with media. Changes in these usages can be seen by looking at shifts in heritage language use over generations, including modifications to pragmatic aspects of language, modes of address, and lexical innovation. Speaking abilities of second- and third-generation youth also draw attention to how language can underscore the types of cultural changes that can occur in migration contexts. Heritage language shift or loss need not mean a disassociation with aspects of one’s heritage culture, and studies of style show how youth construct linguistic identities using aspects of their heritage language as well as varieties of English. The use of varieties of English linked to other racial groups, such as AAVE, as well as the use of locally created, distinctive styles of speaking that operate at the school level demonstrate the creativity of youth in their language practices with one another. Differences of language use within an ethnic group are especially important to understanding how racialization and ethnic identity formation occur. Style draws attention to this variance and expands questions of language use beyond bilingual ability, retention, and loss to provide a fuller sense of how language use is a meaningful part of identity, subjectivity, and generational change in migration contexts.

The ways in which Asian American youth are positioned by language ideologies and class shape how they think about and use their heritage languages. In the White public sphere, heritage languages are largely unwelcome outside of events and contexts that celebrate multiculturalism and ethnic diversity, and heritage languages can be vehicles for anti-immigrant sentiment. One such criticism is that immigrants cling to their heritage languages and refuse to learn English. Research indicates just the opposite. In one study, 85% of the U.S.-born second-generation respondents indicated that they are able to speak English very well (Rumbaut, 2002), even outperforming both the first- and third-generation youth (Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Furthermore, high rates of shift from bilingualism to English monolingualism are occurring among the second generation, and these findings confirm that immigrant families are certainly learning English (Alba & Nee, 2003). Nonetheless, language-based prejudice and accent discrimination remain a central part of linguistic life for adults and youth of the new immigration alike (Lindeman, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997; Zhou & Bankston, 1998). This can happen differently for youth whose language practices are marked in a school context—whether it is Spanish, Punjabi, AAVE, or a hybrid style that stands out as different from MAE. The specific reception of each varies according to context, but the overall dynamic draws attention to how language use can be a contentious aspect of diasporic youth acculturation, and that the White public sphere does not readily accommodate linguistic variation.

Such a reaction underscores the challenges as well as opportunities Asian American youth face as they use heritage languages and varieties of English to construct identities and negotiate meanings of race, class, and gender in America. Further research on uses of heritage languages and varieties of English is needed to provide a broader range of case studies that can shed light on aspects of diaspora and migration for Asian American youth. An increased emphasis on spaces outside of formal pedagogical contexts can expand understandings of language use in immigrant education studies to consider the other ways in which schools regard youth language use. Likewise, family- and community-based research on language use can offer alternative perspectives to that of intergenerational tension by considering linguistic aspects of socialization, humor, emotion, and everyday interaction alongside cultural clashes. Taken together, the language practices of Asian American youth can be considered as a dynamic and integral part of understanding identity, diaspora, and generational change.

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## NOTE

<sup>1</sup>Of the approximately 2,200 students during the 1999–2000 school year, nearly 50% were Asian American (about 30% Desi), 25% Latino, 12% White, 6% African American, and less than 1% Native American.

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