Development and Impact of Hakka Identity Curriculum in Hakka Langauge Immersion Program

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The study aimed to develop and assess the effectiveness of a "Hakka Identity" curriculum in enhancing preschoolers' Hakka identity. Collaborating with Hakka immersion preschool teachers, the researcher developed the curriculum in a Hakka community setting. A non-Hakka immersion preschool class served as the control group. Qualitative data from the curriculum development involved observations, interviews, and document analysis, while quantitative data for effectiveness were collected using the "Hakka Attitude Scale" and "Situation-Based Language Attitude" tools. Qualitative analysis utilized qualitative methods, and quantitative analysis involved covariance analysis to examine Hakka identity score differences between experimental and control groups. Results revealed higher Hakka identity scores in the experimental group, specifically in "Hakka Language and Culture Attitude" and "Situation-Based Language Attitude." Preschoolers in the Hakka immersion preschool demonstrated a positive impact on overall Hakka identity, particularly in the "Hakka language action" aspect. They also exhibited a more positive perception of Hakka language users. Recommendations for promoting Hakka identity curriculum and future research are provided, emphasizing the curriculum's positive influence on preschoolers' Hakka identity.

Keywords: Cultural and language identity, Hakka immersion teaching, early childhood education, language-cultural attitudes, heritage language education.

Introduction

Background

The Hakka language represents one of the most severely endangered heritage languages in Taiwan. Recognizing the crisis of Hakka language erosion, the Hakka Affairs Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, initiated Hakka immersion education in elementary and preschools nationwide in 2019. This immersive approach aimed to foster an environment conducive to Hakka language usage through interactive learning, thereby enhancing listening and speaking abilities (Hakka Affairs Council, 2022). While Hakka immersion education primarily emphasizes regional promotion, the coexistence of diverse linguistic and multicultural contexts, including Mandarin, Hokkien, and Heritage languages, is prevalent in Hakka immersion classrooms. Therefore, beyond the enhancement of Hakka language proficiency, Hakka immersion education aspires to promote self-identity and cross-linguistic and cultural competence among students. It is imperative for children to comprehend the linguistic and cultural diversity within classrooms and societal settings, respecting differences and diverse perspectives. Such cross-linguistic and cultural competence has become a crucial educational goal in contemporary early childhood education (Corapi & Short, 2015). However, there is currently a significant dearth of teaching resources and empirical research addressing self-identity and cross-linguistic attitude development in heritage language education in Taiwan. Both pre-service and in-service early childhood educators lack sufficient resources to support the implementation of "self-identity" and "cross-linguistic attitude" curricula (Genesee & Hamayan, 2016; McClure et al., 2017). The primary objective of this research is to develop a curriculum related to "Hakka identity" and explore whether this curriculum effectively enhances children's "Hakka identity." Based on this research objective, the primary research questions are as follows:

1. What is the content of the "Hakka identity" curriculum in the Hakka language immersion program?
2. What is the impact of the "Hakka identity" curriculum on children?

Hakka identity

Heritage Language Revitalization Immersion (IRI) is an internationally recognized language teaching model used to preserve heritage languages. Studies suggest that immersion education should consider bilingualism and biculturalism as goals, encouraging students not only to learn the language but also to understand and respect their own culture and appreciate different cultures (Hernández, 2015). Therefore, Hakka immersion education should also view Hakka identity as one of its educational objectives (Chen & Tsai, 2022). In this study, "Hakka identity" is defined as the awareness of one's Hakka language and cultural characteristics, recognizing differences with other language cultures, and affirming one's own language and culture. These are the key abilities that the

curriculum aims to cultivate in young children. Several considerations need attention in developing a curriculum to achieve this goal. Firstly, in the context of language immersion education, teachers must be bilingual and bicultural to have a comprehensive understanding of different languages and cultures. The initial step in implementing the curriculum is to raise children's cultural awareness. For instance, using appropriate teaching methods to showcase elements of various cultures and engaging in discussions on how these elements are presented and perceived in different cultures (Byram et al., 2001). Martens et al. (2015) recommend practical approaches in curriculum development, such as planning a specific theme, developing parent-school cooperation activities, incorporating cultural story texts, discussing cultural elements, planning a learning unit, and transitioning the curriculum to cross-cultural thinking and discussion. The study will consider these suggestions in the curriculum planning process.

Assessment of language and cultural identity

Studies on language and cultural attitudes commonly incorporate cognitive, affective, evaluative, and behavioral elements (Kurniasari & Mbato, 2018). Cognitive pertains to understanding language or culture, affective involves emotional responses, evaluative includes assessing values, and behavioral intentions refer to engagement in language or cultural actions. Despite the multidimensional nature, assessment tools may not cover all aspects simultaneously. However, interconnected elements allow partial assessment (Preston, 2013). Holmes (2013) categorizes language attitudes into three levels: towards the ethnic group, its language, and speakers. Assessment should cover cognitive, affective, evaluative, and behavioral elements, linking to attitudes towards the ethnic group and language users. Soukup (2012) outlines two main approaches: direct (surveys, structured interviews) and indirect methods. Direct methods inquire about views on language and culture through participant responses, but they may not comprehensively cover diverse aspects (Fishman & García, 2010). The "Matched-guise technique" (MGT) is common in preschooler language attitude assessment, presenting recordings for evaluation (Loureiro-Rodriguez et al., 2013). However, early MGT may imply language preference rather than negative attitudes. Recent MGT studies allow children to select multiple preferences. The "Multiresponse Racial Attitude" (MRA) by Doyle and Aboud (1995) presents adjectives for placement by gender and race. Tester language and ethnicity influence results, recommending the use of two languages and computer-guided methods for reliability (Soukup, 2012; Borgers, De Leeuw & Hox, 2000).

Materials and Methods

Participants

The curriculum development and implementation primarily took place in a Hakka language immersion preschool class (W class). This class consists of two teachers and one educational assistant, none of whom had prior experience with teaching Hakka identity, with only minimal sporadic training experiences. During the initial stages of curriculum development, the researcher provided guidance and training on relevant theories and curriculum design. The curriculum was collaboratively developed by the researcher and the early childhood educators. In addition to the experimental class involved in the Hakka identity curriculum development, a control class was included in the outcome assessment phase. This class served as a non-Hakka language immersion control group. Both classes had similar teacher backgrounds, environmental settings, and general early childhood education curricula, aiming to eliminate these factors as potential interference in the research results. The basic information of the experimental and control groups is presented in Table 1:

Table 1 Information of Experimental Group and Control Group

Group	Number of children	Gender ratio	Hakka ratio	Average age
Hakka immersion (experimental-W)	21	.48	.81	6.29
Non-Hakka immersion (control-H)	25	.32	.24	6.32

Data Collection

Curriculum Implementation Process. The curriculum design for Hakka identity was primarily guided by the researcher in collaboration with the teachers. The researcher conducted weekly observations in the teachers' classrooms, followed by one-on-one discussions to help clarify teaching difficulties, provide suggestions, discuss current challenges, propose improvement methods, and plan for the next sessions. Data collected during the process included research journals, observations, interviews, and document collection.

Curriculum Outcomes. (1) <u>Hakka language and culture attitude scale</u>. Hakka identity was primarily assessed using the "Hakka language and culture attitude" scale developed by Chen and Tsai (2022). This scale aimed to evaluate children's identification with Hakka language, Hakka speakers, and Hakka cultural items. All questions were presented using a tablet computer, incorporating images and Hakka pronunciation. Before the formal assessment, a trial of three

questions was conducted to ensure the children understood how to respond. To prevent any language comprehension issues, instructions were given in both Hakka and Mandarin, allowing children to choose their preferred language for instructions. The assessment questions are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 Hakka Identity Scale Interview Questions

Attitude towards Hakka Language Media (MP)：Watching programs, listening to music, chants, songs, and stories in Hakka	**Attitude towards Hakka Speakers (SP)**：Presentation of young children speaking Hakka	**Presentation of Hakka-related people and objects (AP)**：Action Inclination towards Hakka People and Objects (AP)
Do you like this program?	Is this person intelligent?	Do you want to learn Hakka langauge?
Do you like this music?	Is this person beautiful/handsome?	Do you want to play with Hakka people?
Do you like this nursery rhyme?	Is this person popular?	Do you want to speak Hakka with friends?
Do you like this song?	Is this person good?	Do you want to sing Hakka songs?
Do you like this story?	Is this person courteous?	Do you want to attend a Hakka language school?

(2) Situational language attitude scale. In this study, the research design drew inspiration from the "Multiresponse" assessment method established by Doyle and Aboud (1995) and created five positive (e.g., helping others) and five negative (e.g., pushing others) social interaction scenarios. The approach involved using a short story where five positive behaviors (such as sharing toys, assisting others, comforting someone, behaving well, being polite) and five negative behaviors (such as damaging toys, hitting others, scolding others, misbehaving, littering) were presented. Regardless of the positive or negative behavior, each was accompanied by a contextual illustration (see Figure 1), aiding children in understanding the positive/negative actions within the context. The assessment was conducted through one-on-one interviews with children. For each behavior mentioned, children were asked, "Who do you think did this behavior?" Children could choose or repeat their selection by pointing to one of three characters, each looking identical but speaking a different language (i.e., Hakka/Mandarin/Min Nan).

Figure 1 Caption: Situation-based cross-language attitude assessment
Figure AltText: The first line showcases images depicting positive behaviors such as sharing toys, helping others, offering comfort, exhibiting good performance, and displaying politeness. The second line features images illustrating negative behaviors, including destroying toys, hitting someone, scolding others, engaging in bad behavior, and littering.

Both assessments were conducted in a one-on-one format, facilitated by early childhood education students who had received at least four hours of professional training. Due to the limited attention span of young children, the testing sessions were designed not to exceed fifteen minutes. The assessments were conducted in a quiet space within the preschools. All assessment questions were prerecorded on a computer, with the computer automatically playing the questions. The facilitator's role was primarily to assist the children with the operation, minimizing intervention.

Although the two assessments were adapted from previous literature research methods, all test questions underwent a trial run with five immersion children, and adjustments were made based on their responses and interactions. Feedback from three scholarly experts was sought to assess expert validity. To enhance the reliability of the two interview assessments, the researcher conducted a pilot study with 30 children from the middle and upper classes of the immersion program (a total of 60 children) for internal consistency reliability testing. As the variables in the research tool were nominal, the Kuder-Richardson reliability test yielded values greater than 0.8, indicating good reliability. Only after confirming the good reliability of both assessment tools did the formal assessments begin.

Data analysis

Research Hypothesis. After the implementation of the Hakka identity curriculum, there will be a significant difference in Hakka identity between the experimental group and the control group, with higher Hakka identity scores observed in the experimental group.

coring Method. (1) Assessment of Hakka language and cultural attitudes:

- Assign scores based on the following rules: Smiling face (liking) -- 4 points, Neutral face (no feeling) -- 2 points, Sad face (disliking) -- 0 points.
- Sum up the scores for each question and record them in the following codes:

- HMP: Score for attitudes towards Hakka media (MP)
- HSP: Score for attitudes towards Hakka speakers (SP)
- HAP: Score for action tendencies towards Hakka (AP)
- THP (Total Hakka Identity Score) = HMP + HSP + HAP

(2) Situational Language Attitudes: (I) Count the number of times a child chooses different language speakers in the five "positive behavior" and five "negative behavior" situations; (II) Calculate the percentage of choosing "Hakka" and "All" in the five positive behaviors represents a better perception of Hakka language speakers, indicating a stronger Hakka identity.

Statistical Analysis. Utilize analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to compare the average Hakka identity scores between the experimental and control groups. Determine whether the average Hakka identity score of the experimental group is significantly higher than that of the control group.

Results

Hakka identity curriculum

The development of the Hakka identity curriculum primarily adopts a thematic construction approach. Teacher's design discussions around a specific theme, and the course direction is expanded based on children's interests and the content of each discussion. There are no predetermined outcomes or directions. The actual implementation of the Hakka identity curriculum in the preschool lasted approximately two and a half months. The thematic curriculum on Hakka identity consists of three subtopics: "Understanding oneself," "Understanding Family," and "Understanding the Community." The details of the activities are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Theme, Objectives, and Activities of Hakka Identity Curriculum

Subtopic	Objectives	Hakka Identity Activities
Understanding Oneself	▪ Introduce oneself in Hakka	▪ Introduce oneself in Hakka (e.g., "My name is __, I am __ years old, I am [ethnicity]")
	▪ Recognize one's own characteristics	▪ Create a self-portrait with light clay, describing personal features (e.g., dark hair, tall)
	▪ Identify oneself as a Hakka person	▪ Choose an item representing oneself, describe why it represents, and share feelings and expectations about oneself

Understanding Family	▪ Introduce family members in Hakka ▪ Introduce Hakka people and other ethnic groups, along with their traditional characteristics	▪ Create a family tree and introduce family members and relationships in Hakka ▪ Introduce the ethnicities of family members (e.g., Hakka), their characteristic names, and traditional features (e.g., Hakka dishes, festivals, customs) ▪ Create a family story picture book using different materials and narrate it in Hakka
Understanding Community	▪ Understand the community characteristics of the Hakka ethnic group, compare and discuss similarities and differences in communities of different ethnic groups. ▪ Respect and appreciate diverse cultural characteristics.	▪ Share languages commonly used in each child's family (Min / Hakka / Mandarin / Vietnamese), engage in language sharing and recognition games ▪ Discuss the picture book "People": explore differences in races worldwide, appearance variations, and skin color differences, incorporating discussions on perspectives about differences ▪ Discuss the picture book "Living with Children from Around the World": explore diverse customs worldwide and compare with different ethnic groups in Taiwan, with children sharing their opinions ▪ Introduce and engage in Hakka community's traditional features: prepare and taste Hakka cuisine, observe Hakka architectural characteristics and construct different forms of Hakka houses with building blocks, appreciate and create Hakka songs, and introduce traditional Hakka artifacts

In the curriculum and teaching, various aspects of Hakka identity, such as cognition, emotions, evaluation, and action, are covered. For instance, children first learn about the language and cultural characteristics of the Hakka people (cognition), discuss their feelings and opinions about this language and culture (emotions and evaluation), and eventually engage in actions to practice self-identification (e.g., persuading parents to speak Hakka). The activities within the curriculum are diverse and engaging, including activities such as book sharing, clay sculpture, and block construction. These activities allow children to participate in learning and discussions about Hakka identity through multiple senses and enjoyable games.

Impact of Hakka identity curriculum

Hakka language and culture attitude scale. Compare the scores on the "Hakka language and culture attitude scale" for the experimental group and the control group preschoolers. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 Comparison of "Hakka language attitude"

Hakka attitude aspects	school	Pretest			Posttest			Increment 3		
		m	SD	T / p	m	SD	T / p	m	SD	T / p
Hakka attitude (TH)	W[1]	42.38	10.89	1.20	43.14	10.48	2.13	0.76	9.04	1.22
	H[2]	37.92	13.81	0.24	34.96	14.70	0.04	-2.96	11.23	0.23
Hakka Media (HM)	W	12.10	3.13	0.66	12.19	4.29	1.05	0.10	3.49	0.61
	H	11.36	4.19	0.51	10.80	4.66	0.30	-0.56	3.76	0.55
Hakka speaker (HS)	W	14.48	4.81	0.64	14.19	4.64	1.10	-0.29	2.85	0.56
	H	13.44	5.93	0.52	12.48	5.90	0.28	-0.96	5.17	0.58
Hakka Action (HA)	W	15.81	6.00	1.52	16.76	5.46	2.69	0.95	6.80	1.20
	H	13.12	5.97	0.14	11.68	7.32	0.01	-1.44	6.67	0.24

1：W（n = 21）; 2：H（n = 25）; 3：Increment = posttest-pretest

From Table 4, it is evident that there were no significant differences in the pretest and incremental average scores of "Hakka Language and Cultural Attitudes" between the experimental group and the control group. Similarly, there were no significant differences in the pretest and incremental average scores (HM, HS, HA) for the three subcategories of Hakka language and cultural attitudes (i.e., HM, HS, HA) between the two schools' children.

However, there was a significant difference in the "posttest average total score" of Hakka language and cultural attitudes between the experimental group and the control group (p-value=0.04). The posttest average total score for Hakka language and cultural attitudes was significantly higher for the experimental group children compared to the control group children. In terms of the three subcategories of Hakka cultural attitudes in the posttest, there was only a significant difference in "HA" In this aspect, the experimental group's posttest average total score for "HA" was significantly higher than that of the control group (p-value= .01).

Table 5 ANCOVA for Hakka language attitude in the posttest

變數	TH		HM		SP		AP	
	F	p	F	p	F	p	F	p
School	3.05	0.09	0.63	0.43	0.74	0.39	4.44	0.04
Pretest	36.02	<0.01	27.13	<0.01	38.63	<0.01	9.49	<0.01

Table 6 Parameter estimates for the model of Hakka language action in the posttest

Variable	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Intercept	5.59	2.42	0.02
School	3.83	2.11	0.04
Pretest	0.47	3.08	< 0.01

Based on the analysis in Tables 5 and 6, both the F-test and the t-tests for regression coefficients indicate that the scores in the posttest for "HA" are significantly influenced by both the "School" and the "Pretest" scores. This suggests that with similar scores in the "HA pretest," the average posttest scores for "HA" among children in the experimental group are 3.83 points higher than those in the control group. This demonstrates a significant positive impact of the Hakka language immersion program with identity-focused curriculum on the posttest scores for "HA" among the children.

   Situational language attitude scale. Another tool used in this study to assess Hakka identity is the "Situational language attitude scale," and the research results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7: Comparison of situational language attitude performance

Cross Language attitude	School	Pretest			Posttest			Increment[3]		
		m	SD	$\frac{T}{p}$	m	SD	$\frac{t}{P}$	M	SD	$\frac{T}{p}$
Positive behavior percentage (PBP)	W[1]	34.29	23.79	1.28	40.95	23.22	2.19	6.67	38.64	0.63
	H[2]	24.80	26.00	0.21	24.00	28.28	**0.03**	-0.80	41.02	0.53
Negative behavior percentage (NBP)	W	30.48	17.46	0.58	24.76	21.82	-1.91	-5.71	29.76	-1.84
	H	26.40	28.12	0.57	40.00	32.15	0.06	13.60	39.46	0.07

1：W（*n*=21）；2：H（*n* = 25）；3：Increment= Posttest – Pretest

According to Table 7, there are no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in the average total scores for the "Positive Behavior Percentage (PBP)" and "Negative Behavior Percentage (NBP)" in the pretest and incremental measures for "Hakka Speakers." However, there is a significant difference in the average scores for "PBP" in the posttest (p-value = 0.03). The children in the experimental group exhibited a higher average in selecting Hakka speakers for positive behaviors in the posttest compared to the control group.

Table 8: ANCOVA for posttest cross-language attitude in Hakka

Variable	Positive Behavior Percentage	Negative Behavior Percentage
	F-value	p-value
School	6.08	0.02
Pretest	2.22	0.14

Table 9: Parameter estimates for the model of positive behavior percentage

Variable	Coefficient	t-value	p-value
Intercept	29.73	4.63	<0.01
School	19.15	2.47	0.02
Pretest	-0.23	-1.49	0.14

According to Tables 8 and 9, both the F-test and the t-test for regression coefficients indicate that the students' scores in the "PBP" posttest are significantly influenced by the "school." However, these scores are not significantly affected by their "PBP" pretest" scores. This suggests that with the pretest scores for "PBP" being equal, the experimental group children, under the influence of the Hakka identity program within the Hakka language immersion, demonstrated a 19.15% higher average in the posttest for selecting Hakka speakers (or all speakers) for positive behaviors compared to the control group. This indicates a significant positive impact of the Hakka identity program within the Hakka language immersion on students' "PBP" posttest scores.

Discussion

The research results indicated that the experimental group, compared to the control group, exhibited higher Hakka identity scores in both "Hakka language and culture attitudes" and "Situation-based language attitudes." In other words, preschoolers who underwent the "Hakka identity" program in the Hakka language immersion preschool demonstrated a positive impact on their overall Hakka identity, especially in "Hakka language action". Furthermore, the results show

that preschoolers who participated in the Hakka language immersion and Hakka identity program had a more positive perception of Hakka speakers compared to the control group. The study's findings align with prior research, suggesting that well-designed curricula in incremental bilingual or immersion teaching environments can positively influence students' language self-identity attitudes (Feinauer & Howard, 2014; Tedick & Wesely, 2015). Based on the study's results, the following recommendations are proposed:

Promotion of Hakka identity temed curriculum: The study find that combining Hakka language immersion teaching with a Hakka identity curriculum positively influenced preschoolers' Hakka identity. It is recommended that future Hakka language immersion classes, while enhancing Hakka language use, also design an "Hakka identity curriculum" to simultaneously improve children's listening and speaking abilities in Hakka. The Hakka identity curriculum can be implemented thematically, starting with discussions on children's Hakka language usage and cultural characteristics (e.g., personal language use and names). It can then progress to incorporate Hakka-related features within the family (e.g., family members' ethnicity, food, festivals, and customs) and expand to the community (e.g., unique features of the local area, similarities, and differences with other ethnicities) and the differences in cultures worldwide. By expanding from children's daily experiences to a global perspective on multiculturalism, this approach nurtures children's local Hakka identity while fostering an appreciation for diverse cultures internationally.

Include a comparison with Hakka Immersion classes without Hakka identity curriculum. The study's experimental group comprised classes with both "Hakka language immersion" and "Hakka identity curriculum," while the control group consisted of classes without either. It is suggested to include a comparison with Hakka immersion classes that did not implement the Hakka identity curriculum. The experimental group's Hakka language immersion environment, coupled with the Hakka identity curriculum, created a scenario where children were immersed in Hakka language and culture. In contrast, the control group represented a typical preschool environment with minimal exposure to Hakka language and culture, even though there were some Hakka-speaking children (24%). The observed difference in Hakka identity between the two groups may stem from differences in the Hakka identity curriculum or the nature of Hakka language immersion teaching. The study's results specifically highlight the positive impact of incorporating the Hakka identity curriculum into Hakka language immersion classes. To determine whether the Hakka identity curriculum is the primary influencing factor, a comparison is needed with Hakka immersion classes where the only variable is the presence or absence of the Hakka identity curriculum.

Acknowledgments

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