



# Third Culture Kids : Language and Identity 'Different Worlds'

Patricia A. L. Ong / CLESOL 2018



# **Who is the TCK?** (Synonym: Global Nomad)

- ☐ **“An individual who has spent a significant part of their developmental years in one or more countries outside their parents’ or their passport culture...”**
- ☐ **“Individuals whose life experience results in feeling partial belonging to multiple cultures but without sense of ownership or complete belonging in any culture.”**
- ☐ **“A person whose primary experience of belonging is not in any one culture but in relationship to others of similar background.”**

(Sources: Pollock and Van Reken; Global Nomads International)



# The Third Culture Model



Home  
Culture  
"First Culture"



Interstitial or  
"Third Culture"

*Shared  
commonalities of  
those living  
internationally  
mobile lifestyles*



Host Culture  
"Second Culture"





## Profiles of TCKs

### Tomomi

Tomomi is 5 years old. Her father is Finnish and her mother is Japanese. They moved to Singapore when Tomomi was 2 years old. Tomomi attends a typical preschool in Singapore. She speaks Japanese to her mother and English when the family are together. She is able to speak Mandarin as well because of the bilingual curriculum in the Singapore preschool.



(Kit Lang, 2017)



(Kit Lang, 2017)

### Hannah

Hannah is 16 years old. Her family has been living in New Zealand since she was 8 years old. Both her parents are Korean and she has an older sister who will go back to Korea to study in a Korean University when she turns 18 years. Hannah, however, thinks she will prefer to continue her studies in New Zealand. She sees herself as 'Kiwi'.



# Identity in TCKs

I am a  
Confusion of cultures.  
Uniquely me.  
I think this is good  
because I can  
understand  
the traveler, sojourner, foreigner,  
the homesickness  
that comes.  
I think this is also bad  
because I cannot  
be understood  
by the person who has sown and  
grown in one place.

They know not  
the real meaning of homesickness  
that hits me  
now and then.  
Sometimes I despair of  
understanding them.  
I am  
an island  
and  
a United Nations.  
Who can recognize either in me  
but God?

— *‘Uniquely Me’ by Alex Graham*  
**James**



# The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg,  
nine-tenths of culture is below the surface.

**Surface Culture**  
Most easily seen  
Emotional level - low

Food, dress,  
music, visual arts,  
drama, crafts,  
dance, literature,  
languages, celebrations, games



**Shallow Culture**  
Unspoken Rules  
Emotional level - high

courtesy, contextual conversational patterns, concept of time,  
personal space, rules of conduct, facial expressions,  
nonverbal communication, body language, touching,  
eye contact, patterns of handling emotions,  
notions of modesty, concept of beauty, courtship practices,  
relationships to animals, notions of leadership, tempo of work,  
concepts of food, ideals of child rearing, theory of disease,  
social interaction rate, nature of friendships, tone of voice,  
attitudes toward elders, concept of cleanliness, notions of adolescence,  
patterns of group decision-making, definition of insanity,  
preferences for competition or cooperation,  
tolerance of physical pain, concept of "self",  
concept of past and future, definition of obscenity,  
attitudes toward dependents,  
problem solving roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation,  
kinship, and ...

**Deep Culture**  
Unconscious Rules  
Emotional level - intense



# The Benefits and Challenges of the TCK experience

*(Pollock & Van Reken, 2017)*

## PROS

- Broader worldview
- Cross-cultural enrichment
- Cultural bridges
- Bilingualism and Multilingualism
- Communication skills
- Ability to blend in
- Adaptability
- Deep relationships
- Independence
- Importance of the present

## CONS

- “Where is home?”
- Dealing with ‘grief’
- Lack of true cultural balance
- Lack proficiency in mother tongue
- Ignorance of home cultures
- Restlessness & rootlessness
- Issues with identity formation
- Issues with sense of belonging
- Emotional withdrawal
- Lack of ownership of any culture

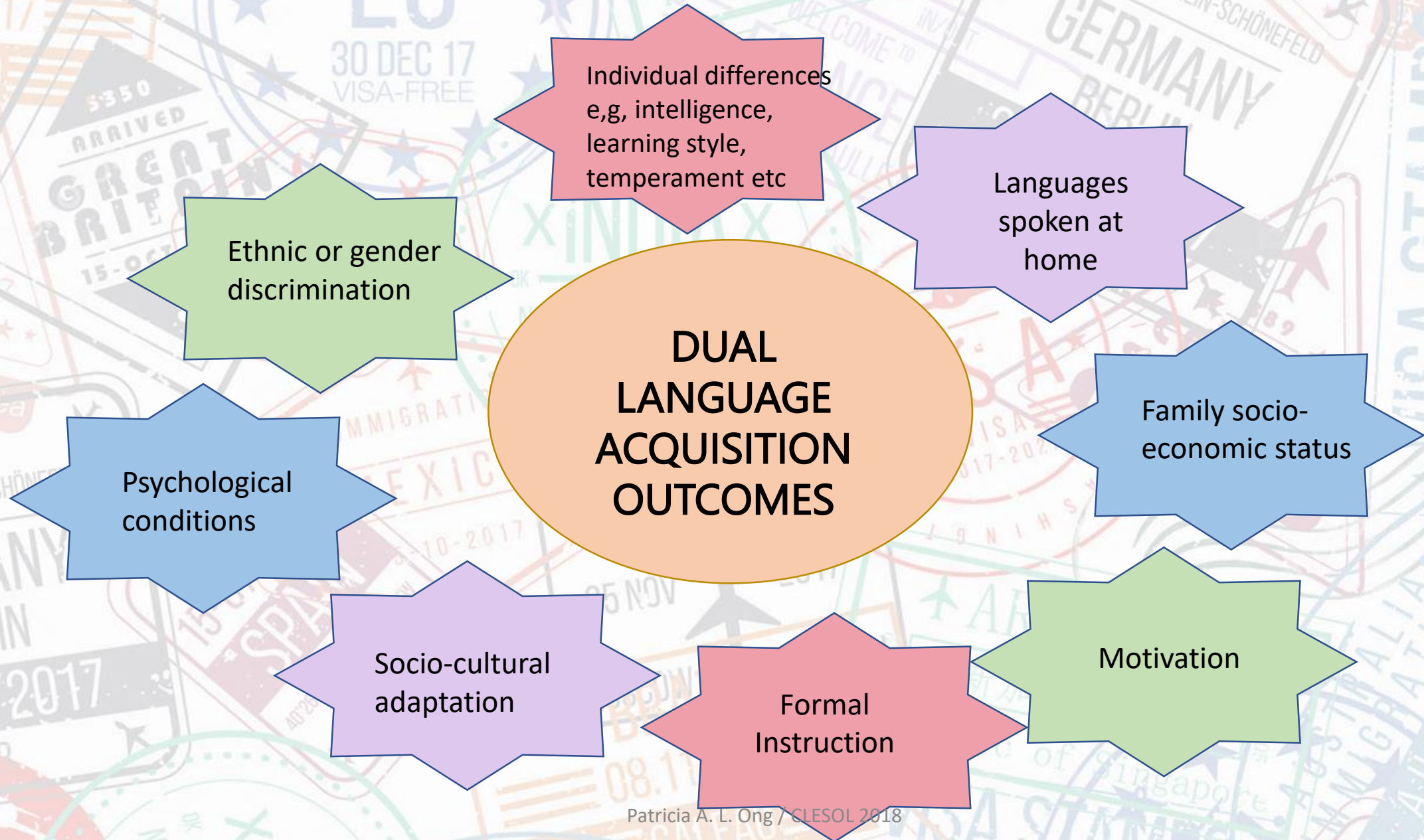


# Linguistic Rights

- ☐ Tool of communication and knowledge.
- ☐ Fundamental attribute of cultural identity
- ☐ Respect for languages of different linguistic communities
- ☐ Traditional resident, indigenous peoples or recent migrants
- ☐ Access to international languages
- ☐ Intercultural education promoting positive attitudes to minority groups
- ☐ Access to language of the larger community and to national education system
- ☐ Schooling in their languages (as desired)
- ☐ Creating opportunities for teaching children their own language and culture
- ☐ Integration of children facilitated by teaching language in use in the school system.



# Factors affecting dual language acquisition outcomes





# TCK: Bi/Multi-lingualism and Identity

- ❑ The connection between **language and identity** are related to our **sense of self** (subjectivity) and **cultural practice**.
- ❑ Ways of understanding **relationships, meanings** and **social practices** are formed in language and for bilingual persons, this process operates in **two or more languages** or dialects.
- ❑ Identity formation occurs as they negotiate between **two linguistic codes**.
- ❑ Individual's negotiation of two or more cultural world in which identity is mediated across **cultural, linguistic** and **racial lines**.

*(Halls, 2001; Robinson & Jones Diaz, 2006)*



# Approaches to Bilingual Education

## Mother Tongue-based instruction

- ❖ The learning programme is delivered entirely in children's L1.

## Bilingual Education (Two-way bilingual education)

- ❖ Use of two languages as media of instruction.
- ❖ 'Dual language instruction'

## Mother Tongue-based Bilingual Education (Developmental Bilingualism)

- ❖ L1 is used as a primary medium of instruction for the whole of primary school while L2 introduced as a subject of study in itself to prepare students for eventual transition to some academic subjects in L2.

## Multilingual Education

- ❖ Formal use of more than two languages in the curriculum.



# Approaches to Bilingual Education

## Transitional Bi/Multilingual Education (known as 'bridging')

- ❖ The objective is a planned transition from one language of instruction to another.
- ❖ 'Short cut' or 'early exit' involves an abrupt transition to L2 instruction after only 2-3 years in school,
- ❖ 'Late transition or 'late exit' refers to a switch to L2 instruction after a child has become fully fluent academically in L1.

## Maintenance Bi/Multilingual Education

- ❖ After L2 has been introduced, both (or all) chosen languages are media of instruction. L1 instruction continues, often as a subject of study, to ensure ongoing support for children to become academically proficient in L1. This is also called 'additive bilingual education' because one or more languages are added but do not displace L1.

## Immersion or foreign language instruction

- ❖ The entire education programme is provided in as language that is new to the child.

## Submersion (Sink or Swim)

- ❖ When speakers of non-dominant languages have no choice but to received education in languages that they do not understand. This approach is subtractive bilingualism, that is L2 learning at the expense of L1.



# Models of bilingual education

## United States:

- ☐ Subtractive model
- ☐ Learning in the student's L2 takes over the home language
- ☐ Monolingual education in English
- ☐ Often results in poor academic results\_ -> policies of English-only education
- ☐ Limits the positive forms of bilingual education incorporating the child's home language.
- ☐ Leads to inequality in education
- ☐ Inequitable access to education for students from non-English backgrounds

**(Bhatia, 2006; Cummins, 2003)**



# Models of bilingual education

## Canadian Model:

- ❑ Additive model (learning a new language without detriment to the first)
- ❑ Immersion bilingual education: 2 languages are viewed with equal value
- ❑ Two official languages are French and English.
- ❑ Although equal representation is intended, may not be in reality
- ❑ However, speakers of minority languages find limited options to maintain their languages alongside learning English.
- ❑ Still issues of inequality with regards to immigrant languages.

**(Bhatia, 2006; Cummins, 2003)**



# Home literacy practices

- ❑ Body of literature examining biliteracy and the importance of development of literacy in students' home languages.
- ❑ Incorporation of literacy experiences in all languages into the classroom.
- ❑ Bilingual families engage in bilingual literacy practices at home
  - social purposes
  - maintaining community links
  - cultural interests
- ❑ Internet-based communication and information
  - access linguistic and literacy resources
  - global communication
  - mobile phones, sms, online networking sites
- ❑ Home integral site for better metalinguistic understanding through decoding and comprehension tasks

**(Bartlett, 2007; Kenner & Gregory, 2003; Marsh, 2003)**



# TCK: Identity Development

- ☐ Can be a challenging issue for some TCKs
- ☐ Sense of belonging: relationships & countries.
- ☐ Reverse culture shock
- ☐ Ambiguous and ambivalent feelings regarding home and roots.
- ☐ Set aside third culture experiences in order to integrate
- ☐ Not always understood by non-overseas experienced peers
- ☐ Issue of national and religious identity
- ☐ May become socially marginalized



# TCK: Identity Development

□ Identity as a **socially** and **culturally** constructed process comprising of five main characteristics:

- Identity as dynamic and changing
- Identity as complex, contradictory and multifaceted
- Identity as something that constructs and is constructed by language.
- Identity construction as influenced by larger social processes of power
- Identity theory linked to classroom practice

(Norton, 2006)



# Language and Identity

- ❑ The language or languages that we speak form an integral part of who we are.
- ❑ Our languages influence our identity, in particular, our ethnic or social identity.
- ❑ Language has been cited as the key element that facilitate balance between various roles and aspects of identities.
- ❑ Language has been theorized as fundamental to national identity.
- ❑ Language learning and language socialization emphasizes learning as an intrinsically social process that involves the construction of identities.

*(Deaux, 2000; Fought, 2006; Lave and Wenger, 1991)*



# TCK: Identity confusion vs Identity Integration

- ❑ Identity construction is a complex and involves interpersonal negotiations which can lead to a conflict in identity for bi-multi-lingual children.
- ❑ Another study has shown that equal quality exposure to two cultures allows integrated identity to develop.
- ❑ Children can construct identities involving multiple cultures.
- ❑ Requires motivation and appropriate environmental support
- ❑ Develop integrated values and beliefs.

(Baker, 2002; Lotherington, 2003)

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i packed light with a heavy heart  
six years worth of baggage  
so many things not a need  
for home was always as transitory as you and me

i kept aside  
the fleece jacket from our five am sunrises  
the flute we stole from sunday's classic cabaret  
broken  
into two

i tucked away the memories they carried  
like when i sang our favourite song  
locked it up inside your favourite purple case  
put it someplace i'd never reach  
a blanket i'd never need

i took with me tomorrow  
all of the possibilities  
swimming under new waterfalls  
hilltops carrying me through alleys  
watching sunsets that won't remind me of our sunrises  
weaving words into a home  
a home that is no longer you

- hansika jethnani



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