

As I pass by the city park, I often find myself watching colorful kites dance in the spring air. When I was younger, I often wondered how kites could stay in the sky without being blown away. After a while, I learned that the string was what kept the kite connected to the handle, despite it being thin and nearly invisible. Now, I have realized that language is a lot like kite string — it keeps us firmly tied to our heritage without us knowing, while we are flying in the air, mingling with other cultures. Language connects us to our roots, but only if we don't lose it first.

We are all like kites flying in the air, interacting with one another. However, if we want to firmly grasp our culture instead of flying away, we must first learn about it from our parents, with language. Continuously teaching us life lessons, tirelessly reminding us to be polite, constantly feeding us tidbits of wisdom, our parents help us soar higher to reach our goals. Yet sometimes, we don't realize how much more our parents could teach us, how many more tales they could tell, if we could be fluent in their language. Our parents carry generations' worth of knowledge and wisdom, all passed down from their ancestors, to their parents, to them, and now, maybe me, but only if I can understand my ancestral language.

Like many Asian Americans, I was born into a family that spoke one language at home, and at school, another. Over the years, I've learned that having two cultures coexist within me helps me become a better person. Like yin and yang, ideas from both Eastern and Western cultures are important to have in order to achieve balance. Eastern culture is yin; it teaches us humbleness, and to be indirect when voicing our opinions. On the other hand, Western culture is yang; it teaches us to be confident and directly speak our thoughts. With these two cultures, we can learn to not be too outspoken, nor too timid — balance.

As for the future, I see one where every Asian American embraces their culture, not one where they push away and ignore their heritage in an attempt to become "American." We must accept and embrace what is already part of us. But before anything, we must learn our language. It is the key to the life lessons that our parents share, the key to the wisdom behind our culture. Sometimes, we need to understand certain languages, certain words, in order to obtain the full meaning behind it. I hope to see future generations speak two tongues — English, and the language of their heritage. This change has to start with us. Bit by bit, we can change ourselves and learn our language. Only by doing this can we pass on our culture and ensure that we, kites, don't fly astray, but remain firmly rooted to our culture.