

Perceptions of identity: A case study of advanced heritage speakers of Chinese

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Lauder program



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FAQ

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Admissions

Community

Contact Us

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Program objectives

- Joint MBA/Master's in International Studies
- Advanced language study in one of eight languages:
 - students are expected to move from an Advanced Mid level of proficiency on the ACTFL scale upon entry to a Superior rating on the Oral Proficiency Interview upon graduation (i.e. be able to “satisfy the linguistic demands of professional and/or scholarly life”)
 - “confidently conduct business in the world region for which they've studied.”

Languages other than English and Spanish* most frequently spoken at home

Rank	Language	N Speakers
1	Chinese	2,022,143
2	French	1,643,838
3	German	1,382,613
4	Tagalog	1,224,241
5	Vietnamese	1,009,627
6	Italian	1,008,370
7	Korean	894,063
8	Russian	706,242
9	Polish	667,414
10	Arabic	614,582

*Spanish=28 million

Enrollment trends 1998-2002*

	1998	2002	% change
■ Arabic	5,505	10,584	92.3
■ Chinese	28,456	34,153	20.0
■ French	199,064	201,979	1.3
■ German	89,020	91,100	2.3
■ Japanese	43,141	52,238	21.1
■ Portuguese	6,926	8,385	21.1
■ Russian	23,791	23,921	0.5
■ Spanish	656,590	746,267	13.7

Student profiles

Gender	Age	Nationality	Birthplace	Years in China	Years in US /other countries
M	27	Chinese (?)	Guangzhou	4 y CN	23 y CN
M	26	Brazilian	São Paulo	Less than 1 year	2 y US; 24 y Brazil
M	29	Malaysian	Malaysia	8 m CN; 14 y Malaysia	14 y US/other countries
M	30	American	Washington D.C.	6 m CN; 4 y Taiwan	25 y US
M	28	American	New York	2.5 y HK	20 y US; 3 y Afri; 1.5 UK
F	25	Canadian	Tai Bei	2 m CN; 3 y Taiwan	5 y US; 17 y Ca
M	31	American	Taiwan	5 y Taiwan	26 y US
F	28	American	Shanghai	12 y CN	11 y US; 5 y France
M	28	American	Los Angeles	2 y CN	26 y US
F	30	American	Shanghai	13 y CN	17 y US
M	28	American	Tennessee	3 y HK; 1.5 Singapore	2.5 y US
F	29	American	Tai Bei	2 y CN; 4 y Taiwan	21 y US; 9 m Thailand
M	28	American	Chicago	3 y CN; 2 y HK; 6 y Taiwan	17 y US
F	28	American	Pittsburg	2 m CN; 3.5 y Taiwan	22 y US; 2 y Mongolia

We thank Jing Sun for assistance with compiling these data

Motivation: “Mary”

- “I am hoping to go back to China, not immediately after graduation but probably five or ten years down the road (. . .) probably in a multinational corporation where they’ll need management that involves cultural sensitivity as well as bilingual skills”

Motivation

- Primarily instrumental, but partially intrinsic:
 - “to understand my heritage better” (John)
 - “to have a deeper connection with my family” (John)
 - “it’s just for personal interest (Ronald)
 - “Lauder has to do with my heritage” (Amy)

Who is a 'native speaker'?

- In the context of SL/FL learning:
- Kramersch (1997):
 - "native speakership . . . is more than a privilege of birth or even of education. It is acceptance by the group that created the distinction between native and nonnative speakers."
- Rampton (1990): expertise, inheritance, and affiliation
- Leung et al. (1997): pedagogy must take into account "learners' expertise and identity."

HL acquisition

- Is HL acquisition different from L1 and L2 acquisition? (cf. Polinsky, 2002; Lynch, 2003; Carreira, 2004):
 - Interrupted acquisition pattern for L1 (incomplete acquisition) followed by late acquisition of L2 (after critical period for many)
- He (2006, p. 2):
 - “the HL learner, by virtue of his/her own family and community background, blurs and blends the distinction between native and target languages and between native speech and target speech communities”

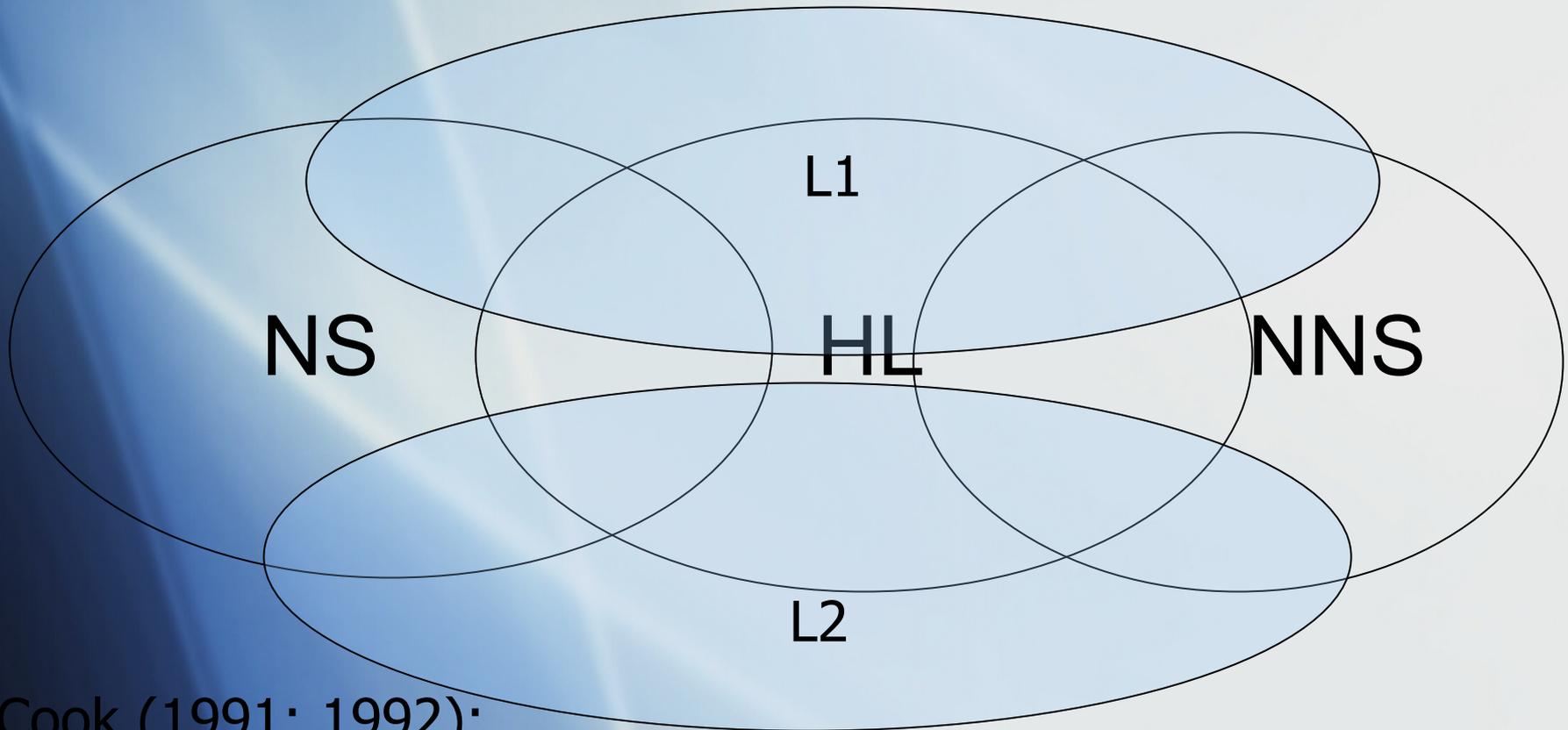
Native language: “Mary”

- “Chinese is still my native language orally because when I speak English I still have an odd accent. However, when it comes to technical language, I think English is probably my native language because I won’t be able to conduct it into Chinese nor can I conduct the presentation in a business setting in Chinese. So it all depends on the setting; I guess everything depends!”

Native language: “Anthony”

- “English is definitely my native language. It’s actually my third language in terms of what language I learned first (. . .) So the Taiwanese dialect is actually officially my first language. That’s what my parents spoke to me when I was like a baby and when I think I was, when we were in Hong Kong. Starting when we moved back to the US, it would be more important for me to learn Mandarin than Taiwanese, so they started speaking in Mandarin. After I like, you know, started school, English sorta took over. “

Multiple competencies: Heritage learners on a continuum from NS to NNS and from L1 to L2



- Cook (1991; 1992):
 - Multi-competence is defined as 'the compound state of mind with two grammars'

Identity

- Zhou (2004):
 - Immigrants of the late 20th and early 21st centuries no longer sense a contradiction between an ethnic identity and an American identity
- Leung et al. (1997):
 - “language use and notions of ethnicity and social identity are inextricably linked.”
- He (2006):
 - “. . . heritage language development is grounded in learners’ participation in social practice and continuous adaptation to the multiple activities and identities that constitute the social and communicative realm they inhabit.”

Identity: “Mary”

“I think I am half American, half Chinese. I think in many way . . . my value system and my ethnics (?) are very much Chinese, but sometimes I think my perspective, the way I handle things could be American, so it depends on the situation”

Identity: “Ronald”

- “To understand both ethnicities that would be both Chinese side and American side but not having a complete knowledge of either one, like you don’t know about like how to play football but you also don’t now how to go to the KTV, so it’s like you know 75% of the two cultures.”
- “it’s going back to crossing two different cultures (. . .) which culture I want to borrow from today . . .”

Attitudes

- Sobral, 2006:
 - Dominant group towards immigrant group and their language (Lippi Green, 1997)
 - HLLs towards both their home language and English:
 - “ethnic ambivalence” or “ethnic evasion” in adolescence (Tse, 1998)
 - “ethnic emergence” in adulthood, i.e. renewed interest in HL (Tse, 1998)
 - Teachers’ attitudes towards their language use (Potowski, 2001; Weger-Guntharp, 2006))
- Furthermore:
 - Parents’ attitudes toward their children’s language (cf. Li, 2006)
 - Language maintenance in the home
 - formal learning in school settings
 - Attitudes by and toward native speakers in the country of origin
 - acceptance by (professional) community

Attitudes: "Walter"

- "I actually grew up in an area which was, you know, California, where there are a lot of Asian-American people and I really thought that was very much like a melting pot. Most Chinese kids and parents immigrated here very much completely absorbed American culture and fully functional as Americans here (. . .) but I do think there are some people who, you know, if their parents make any strong tie with their original heritage culture, it can actually add a lot of value to one's understanding of oneself."

Perceptions by native speakers: Anthony

- “. . . If you tell people that you’re Chinese but that you grew up in the US, people’s expectations are instantly different. They they’re like ‘oh, your Chinese is actually very good’ (. . .) I’m like an overseas Chinese that you know, grew up in the US.
- “. . .they know that I’ve at least worked in Beijing before, I grew up in Taiwan, then they know that I’m not a complete ABC. That’s much better because, you know, American-born Chinese that have just grown up all their lives in the US, they just don’t understand (. . .) I mean it’s almost stereotypical, you know, the American-born Chinese coming in thinking he knows it all . . .”

Perceptions by native speakers: "Ronald"

I: "Do Chinese people perceive you as Chinese when you travel to China?"

R: "They think I'm Korean."

I: "Really?"

R: "Yes, obviously I'm looking like an Asian person but my bad accent causes definitely some judgment . . . that they asked me if I'm Korean, so everyone in Shanghai thought I was Korean."

Advanced L2 competence

- Byrnes (2006): Advanced L2 ability “remarkably neglected in second language acquisition (SLA) research”
- Robinson et al. (2006) note the “relative inability of America’s public schools to prepare Anglophones in foreign languages.”
 - In one study, less than 10% tested at levels sufficient for professional practice
 - In a 2nd study, 9% of 4th year college students in 6 languages reached level 2 of the ILR scale.

Advanced L2 ability and heritage learners

- Carreira and Armengol (1999):
 - “With the globalization of business, individuals proficient in languages spoken in countries that the United States does business with are uniquely positioned to take advantage of their bilingual and bicultural skills.”
- Kagan (2005):
 - “Given HLLs initial proficiencies, it is realistic to design a curriculum for them that aims at the attainment of Advanced or even Superior proficiency (according to the ACTFL Guidelines) which is rarely achieved by non-HLLs in the course of undergraduate education.”
- Xiao (2006):
 - “Heritage learners have linguistic advantages that they can use to reach the level of language and cultural competence critical to the national needs. Such resources should be cherished and employed.”

Advanced proficiency

- Malone et al. (2005) describe a *high-level language learner* as an individual scoring at a level 3 or higher on the 5-point ILR scale or a level of *Superior* or above according ACTFL proficiency Guidelines.”

ILR Scale	ACTFL Scale	Definition
5	Native	Able to speak like an educated native speaker
4+	Distinguished	Able to speak with a great deal of fluency, grammatical accuracy, precision of vocabulary and idiomaticity
4		
3+	Superior	Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations
3		
2+	Advanced Plus	Able to satisfy most work requirements and show some ability to communicate on concrete topics
2	Advanced	Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements
1+	Intermediate - High	Able to satisfy most survival needs and limited social demands
1	Intermediate - Mid	Able to satisfy some survival needs and some limited social demands
	Intermediate - Low	Able to satisfy basic survival needs and minimum courtesy requirements
0+	Novice - High	Able to satisfy immediate needs with learned utterances
0	Novice - Mid	Able to operate in only a very limited capacity
	Novice - Low	Unable to function in the spoken language
0		No ability whatsoever in the language

Perceptions by native speakers: “Mary”

- M: “I think when I speak Chinese, when I speak the language, they can’t really tell I’m from abroad, but I think from, you know, the way I’m dressed or when I interact with my friends I was speaking English (. . .) so I think in China they perceive me as an American, in America, they perceive me as a Chinese.”
- I: “Would you like to be perceived as Chinese when you go to China?”
- M: “I would like to be perceived as Huaqiao meaning Americanized Chinese or a Chinese who has studied abroad, who has a broader exposure than most mainlanders in China.”

The multicompetent speaker

- Byrnes (2006, p. 6):
 - “a focus on the contextual choices by variously bilingual speakers would move the discussion from dwelling on profiles of errorful interference from L1 to L2 and a focus on the language *learner* to complex portraits of the advanced language *user* (Cook 2002). The discussion would shift as well from ‘competence’ in one language or perennially *near-native*, or *ersatz* native, speakers to consideration of the multi-competent speaker--a situation characterized by systematic knowledge of an L2 that is not assimilated to the L1.”
- Hall et al. (2006):
 - Language knowledge is “provisional, grounded in and emergent from language use in concrete social activity for specific purposes that are tied to specific communities of practice”

A new perspective on heritage learning

- Replace deficit perspective on the heritage learner (i.e. “incomplete acquisition,” “limited literacy,” “lacking in grammatical competence,” etc.) with a more dynamic, multicompetent model of the heritage learner as being able to successfully negotiate their linguistic and sociocultural skills in different social contexts.”

“Walter”

- W: “I feel like how much is Chinese and how much is American is not a real value distinction because you know for each individual they have to decide what culture is most suitable for them and frankly, I don’t see that necessarily as a unique culture; it’s simply, I think, a matter of degree between how you are identifying yourself.”
- I: “So actually you are pleased with your backgrounds, with two cultures?”
- W: “Yeah, I do feel like I draw from both cultures in terms of mindset, the way of thinking and value of things”