

BEING “CRITICAL:” WHAT SHOULD CHINESE HERITAGE LANGUAGE SCHOOLS DO?

Shuhan C. Wang, Ph.D.

President, ELE Consulting International, LLC

Director, CELIN at Asia Society

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Chinese Language Education in the U.S.

(Wang 2012a; 2012b)

Type	18 th C to 1949	1950-1969	1970-1985	1990-2004	2005- present
Formal Education System (Top-down)					
Foreign Language		√	√	√	√
World Language				√	√
Bilingual Ed/ English Language Learners			√		√
Home/Community (Bottom-up)					
Home/ Heritage Language	√	√	√	√	√

Chinese Heritage Language Schools in the U.S. (Wang, 2011)

Group Type	Chinatown Chinese Schools	National Council of Associations of Chinese Language Schools (NCACLS)	The Chinese School Association in the United States (CSAUS)
When	19 th Century	Early 1970s	Early 1990s
Family Origin	Southern China; After 1976, ethnic Chinese from Southeast Asia	Taiwan; After late 1990s, adoptive and interracial families	People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, adoptive and interracial families
Language Variety Taught	Cantonese, Taishanese, Hakka	Mandarin, a few teach Taiwanese (a Min Dialect)	Mandarin

Post 2004: Major Players in Chinese

U.S. Government:

- Federal Government (NSLI)
- State and Municipal Efforts

Chinese Government: Hanban

- Confucius Institutes
- Confucius Classrooms

NGOs:

- College Board
- Asia Society
- National Foreign Language Center, University of Maryland

(Wang, 2012a)

Enrollments in Higher Education Language Courses Fall 1998, 2002, 2006, & 2009

	1958	1998	2002	2006	2009
Chinese	615	28,456	34,153	51,582	60,976

Source: *Enrollments in Languages Other Than English in United States Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2009*. MLA, accessible at http://www.mla.org/cgi-shl/docstudio/docs.pl?flsurvey_results
http://www.mla.org/pdf/2009_enrollment_survey_pr.pdf

Chinese Language Enrollments in K-12 Schools

(ACTFL, 2011, Table 6)

Year	*FL Enrollment	Percent **CI	Percent of Chinese Language Enrollment
2004-2005	20,292		0.23%
2007-2008	59,860	+/-2.13%	0.67%

*FL=foreign language; **CI=confidence interval

Heritage Language Programs (2012)

Type of System	Schools	Students	Est. Teachers
NCACLS (Taiwan)	800+	70,000	5,000
CSAUS (PRC)	405	80,000	3,000
Total	1,200+	150,000	8,000

Han, 2012; Liu, 2012; Wang, 2012

An essential question asked by many Chinese heritage communities:

- Now that Chinese language has become a “critical language,” to be promoted in the formal education system in the United States, should we continue our efforts to sustain our heritage language schools (HLSs) or programs?

Wang’s recommendation: Yes, both efforts—Chinese as a World Language and Chinese as a Heritage Language—can co-exist and benefit each other if we can leverage resources from both sides.

Why should Chinese heritage schools continue to exist?

- A HLS is an oasis for the Heritage Discourse (HD) in the dominant society.
- No outsiders will transmit your heritage language and culture for you: Community members are architects and engineers for building the oasis.
- Children need role models in their own group: Adults are role models, empowering agents, and support systems for children to acquire the HD and the Dominant Discourse (DD).
- A HLS is a bonding agent: It is an enterprise that requires collective and long-term investment from the community, families, and individuals.

(Wang, 2014)

Create ethnic heritage “Hubs” in the dominant society

These hubs are special spaces for:

- Physical location
- Linguistic practice
- Social and cultural perspectives, products, and practices
- Time together for special purposes
- Bonding and sharing

What cannot be relegated to formal world language programs:

- Intergenerational transmission of “Heritage Discourse”: content, genres, perspectives, voices, and emotions are different from Chinese as a WL
- Children’s identity formation
- Development and conversion of human, cultural, and social capital in both the dominant and heritage Discourses

(Hornberger & Wang, 2012)

Rethink how to define and assess outcomes of heritage language development

- **Our current view:**

- A monolingual and deficit model that focuses on what HL learners *cannot* do
- Too Idealistic without giving sufficient consideration to children's challenges in identifying their affiliations and gaining linguistic exposure to the heritage and dominant languages in the U. S. context
- Not differentiated and nuanced enough in defining learning outcomes in biliteracy in English and the heritage language

A proposed view

- Define learning outcomes and measure student learning in Chinese language and cultures.
- Help families define the core of realistic intergenerational transmission of “heritage.”
- Help children and other language speakers and learners find authentic identity in and engagement with both languages and cultures.

Conclusion:

(1) HL and WL fields collaborate by

- Granting students access via multiple points of entry and exit in HL and mainstream WL programs
- Creating “Seals of Biliteracy” or Credit by Proficiency that enable HL students to receive academic recognition or credits for their biliteracy, as in the states of California, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, and Washington
- Encouraging students to expand their HL capacity by enrolling in advanced courses in the mainstream system
- Developing engaging curriculum and pedagogy designed to bring students’ HL forward

Conclusion:

(2) Consider heritage languages and cultures as capital

- As cultural capital, they enable us to connect with the past and the future.
- As social capital, they enable us to engage with others.
- As human capital, they enable us to expand our worlds.

Planning Language Capacity for the United States: Top-down support and bottom-up efforts must be mobilized and coordinated.

Thank you

shuhancw@gmail.com

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