ETHNIC IDENTITY AND ACCENT: EXPLORING PHONOLOGICAL ACQUISITION FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FROM CHINA

Meagan A. Hoff

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate College of Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2014

Committee:
Sara Abercrombie, Advisor
Sheri Wells-Jensen
Hyeyoung Bang
ABSTRACT

Sara Abercrombie, Advisor

When we speak we communicate more than the sum of our words. Interlocutors give and interpret information including ethnic and cultural affiliations through those first syllables and sounds of an utterance. The goal of this research is to examine the interactions between ethnic identity constructs and degree of accent in English. Given that identity is a product of social labeling and self-identification, by linking identity and accentedness, this present study gives insight into the dynamics of cross-cultural communication. Participants consisted of 20 native Mandarin speakers recently arrived in the United States and enrolled in a Midwestern American university. This research is a quantitative investigation of the correlation between ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and phonological acquisition. Data was collected at the beginning and end of an academic term. The goal of this study is to explore whether ethnic identity and strength of accent correlate at initial measurement upon arrival to the United States and then three months later, to see if changes in pronunciation are predicted by ethnic identity. The results of a multiple regression analysis revealed that other-group orientation was the most significant predictor of accentedness upon arrival in the United States. Furthermore, repeated measures ANOVA results revealed a significant decrease in other-group orientation over the first semester, with no significant change in accent over the same time period. This means that there was a relationship between other-group orientation and strength of accent when participants arrived in the United States. The change in strength of accent was not significant, however there was a decrease in other-group orientation at the end of the first semester. This indicates that participants were less willing to interact with people from other ethnic groups. These results suggest that the social aspects of language learning, such as interactions with, and positive
attitude towards other ethnic groups are important in the process of phonological acquisition. In addition, cultural adaptation strategies may impact learner’s phonological acquisition. The present findings support a sociocultural approach to language learning that places value on the cultural context of the learning process.
Identity is a practice with great symbolic value,

and language is its medium -Moyer, 2013
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a culmination of so many hours of work and study and is truly the work of a team, for I would have never made it this far without the help and support of my friends, family, and mentors. I would first like to start by acknowledging my thesis committee without whom I would have never made it to the end of this project. First, Dr. Sara Abercrombie, my advisor and chair who endlessly encouraged me and patiently guided me through the process of collecting, analyzing, and writing up my data. Dr. Sheri Wells-Jensen, your sound advice, guidance on all things phonological, and ukulele lessons kept me sane. Dr. Hyeyoung Bang, thank you for the conversations and your encouragement.

Along with my family, I would also like to thank my support system here in Bowling Green, who kept me sane, fed, and focused when I needed it most. To my friends and classmates in the MACIE program, thank you for forever believing in me and voting me most likely to get a PhD. To Kyle Gutek, my trusty writing consultant, thank you for your all of your advice and hard work. To the participants who made this research possible, I thank you for your time and dedication.

Lastly, I would like to thank my friends around the world, who have been with me on my many travels and language adventures that have inspired this work. To the people of Benin, Spain, France, and Germany who have graciously listened and encouraged me through the process of language learning, thank you, and to every person who has had the patience to keep the conversations alive, even when my language skills were nascent. The Couch Surfers of Montpellier, I would have given up on French long ago if it was not for the community you welcomed me into. It is communities like you that make language learning worth all the trouble.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Chapters</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II. LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Adaptation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Culture and Adaptation</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice &amp; Audibility</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language Learning and the Language Learner</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learning</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accent &amp; Pronunciation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparing Standard Chinese Phonology and English Phonology</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity and Language Acquisition</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Settings</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Level</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX A. SURVEY WITH MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE........ 73
APPENDIX B. PRONUNCIATION SCRIPT .............................................................................. 75
APPENDIX C. ACCENT RATING SHEET ................................................................................ 77
APPENDIX D. CONSENT LETTER............................................................................................ 79
APPENDIX E. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL ................................. 81
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table

1  Descriptive Data ........................................................................................................................................... 39
2  Prediction of Accent using Ethnic Identity and Other-Group Orientation at Time 1... 46
3  Refined Regression using Accent and Other-Group Orientation at Time 1 .................. 46
4  Change Over Time in Accent, Ethnic Identity, and Other-Group Orientation.............. 49
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Identity is an elusive concept to define, encompassing multiple facets both at a personal level and a group level. Identity formation is an ongoing process that is formed through interactions of the internal self and external contexts. This interplay of personal and social identity is manifested in daily life through actions, beliefs, attitudes, and speech. The manner of speaking is acquired within a social construct; as such, one’s manner of speaking can be understood as a manifestation of one’s self (Moyer, 2013). Pronunciation and accent indicate cultural, regional, and ethnic affiliations on an intimate and often unconscious level (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). In addition, the control which speakers have over their accents varies by individual. This is perhaps most apparent in the context of second language acquisition (SLA).

Learners often acquire the target language pronunciation to varying degrees, with factors as distinct as age and motivation having been attributed to variations in phonological acquisition (Slevc & Miyake, 2006). Pronunciation is an aspect of language learning that seems largely out of learners’ conscious control. It is both difficult to monitor and particularly difficult for learners with no training to practice deliberately. Despite the seemingly unconscious nature of phonological attainment, it remains an important factor in communication. Both the importance of pronunciation for successful communication and the difficulty experienced by learners in making deliberate progress drive the need to understand the unconscious dynamics behind accent. Identifying and understanding which factors facilitate pronunciation acquisition is important in that it informs educational approaches to language learning, as well as the debate of intelligibility, which asks to what extent learners must sound native in a foreign language (see Lippi-Green, 2007). The importance of accent is far-reaching. Gatbonton, Trofimovich, and Magid (2005) found that “speech…has been shown to be a stronger cue than physical features or
abilities in inviting evaluative judgments” (p. 491). This means that for language learners their accent is among the first manifestation of identity that they reveal to others. It is often through those first syllables and sounds that speakers are read and judged.

**Background**

The present analysis of SLA, accent, and identity is grounded in Vygotskian’s (2004) sociocultural theory and the theoretical work of Bourdieu (1977; 1991). Both theories stress an understanding that human development and learning stem from interactions and engagements with the social world. A sociocultural approach to second language acquisition requires a conceptualization of language in terms of its function as a social tool (Cross, 2009). Bourdieu’s (1991) work emphasizes the importance of the hearer in communication. It is through the filter of the hearer that accent is perceived. The act of speaking necessitates an act of hearing and within these actions social relations and power relations are assigned, confirmed, and maintained. These processes provide insight into the experience of the language learner.

This framework provides the foundation necessary to analyze the interplay of language and identity. Learners are acquiring the linguistic tools necessary for interacting in a culturally and linguistically new environment. Language is a key tool in sociocultural theory given that language is used to negotiate cultural contexts (Vygotsky, 1986). This requires that research on language learning take into consideration the cultural contexts as well as the learner’s situation within, and reactions to, these contexts. The process of situating oneself within a new cultural context entails an evaluation of self and social affiliations, including how one affiliates and thus identifies with their ethnicity. A possible factor in pronunciation acquisition is the impact of ethnic identity (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). If we conceive of pronunciation or accent as a
manifestation of ethnic identity this could impact the extent to which language learners relinquish or guard their accent as a manifestation of themselves.

**Justification**

This study aims to address the needs of English learners through building an understanding of the dynamics correlated to phonological acquisition. Understanding the link between ethnic identity and accentedness can elaborate the difficulties experienced by language learners and inform educational aims and techniques.

While several studies examine the relationship between ethnic identity and language acquisition in immigrant communities (see Bartolomi, 2011), this study aims to broaden the scope to language learners in early adulthood who experience identity negotiation in a voluntary language immersion experience. As international students in an American university, students are negotiating identities in order to adapt to the local contexts. The extent to which international students identify with other ethnic groups, and more specifically with the dominant ethnic group of the host country, may also have significant impacts on the processes of identity negotiation and second language acquisition. Ethnic identity may be questioned and explored during this negotiation period and these questions may have a strong impact on the degree of foreign accent. Many factors could influence this process including interactions with, attitudes towards, and perceived acceptance into the target social group and whether or not the student holds positive feelings towards their own ethnic identity.

According to the Institute of International Education, 819,644 international students studied in the United States in 2013. Many of these students arrive with the goal to improve their English, and a large part of this goal is to sound like a native speaker (Jenkins, 2002). Often the student is leaving a familiar cultural environment and entering into a society where the language
is different and the culture is new. In these periods of reflection comes growth as students
develop their English language skills and reevaluate their identity in the face of new lifestyles
and cultures.

Representing 29 percent of the international student population, Chinese students are the
largest group that comes to the United States for higher education (Institute of International
Education, 2013). As such, student from China are an important part of American Universities.
The experience of each Chinese student is impacted by their native culture, background, and
English ability. While the study abroad experience may be different for each nationality the
interactions between language and ethnic identity for Chinese students may be relevant in
understanding these same interactions for other international students.

The goal of this paper is to explore the relationship between ethnic identity and
pronunciation in second language acquisition. The research questions address the extent to which
internal and external factors of ethnic identity impact a learner’s pronunciation acquisition. The
main research question includes two components:

1. Is there a significant relationship between ethnic identity and phonological
   acquisition in second language learning?
2. Is there a significant relationship between the strength of orientation towards
   other ethnic groups and phonological acquisition?

In addition to the main research question, the following sub-questions will be addressed:

1. Do international students experience a significant change in ethnic identity during
   the first semester of study in an international university?
2. Do international students experience a significant change in other-group
   orientation during the first semester of study in an international university?
3. Do international students experience a significant change in degree of foreign accent during the first semester of study in an international university?

The primary hypothesis being explored in this study is that ethnic identity will predict degree of accentedness in a second language. The secondary hypothesis is that strength of orientation towards other ethnic groups will predict degree of accentedness in a second language. Finally, there will be significant changes in ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and strength of accent over the first semester spent in an international university.

A study abroad experience is a key moment to reflect upon ethnic identity (Jackson, 2008). Studies have shown that ethnic identity is more evident when a person is positioned as a minority (Phinney, 1989). For many international students this may be their first experience living outside of their culture, thus they are likely to be exploring their ethnic identity for the first time. Those learners who feel excluded from the dominant target-language culture may identify more strongly with their ethnic identity, which may impact the strength of accent maintenance in the second language (Gatbonton et al., 2005). Where multiple studies have shown the important role of language in identity formation, few studies attach this importance to a language learner who is negotiating identity. Understanding the dynamics of ethnic identity and language acquisition can provide further insight into the experience of international students learning English.

This research addresses the question of pronunciation in the L2 classroom, as well as the limits of intelligibility. In a globalized world, cross-cultural communication has become a reality in academic, business, and daily life. Within contexts of cross-cultural communication expectations of learners and listeners are vague as are the delineations of intelligibility. Contextualizing accent as an aspect of ethnic identity may help inform the debate on what
expectations educators and listeners should and can place on non-native speakers. Understanding the internal and external factors that influence learners’ accent acquisition will help conceptualize the delimitations of intelligibility (Kachru, 1997).

While many learners strive to sound native, less than half of the participants in this study expressed interest in sounding more native (Jenkins, 2002). One participant even expressed a desire to sound Chinese when speaking English. “I am Chinese, I want to sound Chinese”. It cannot be assumed that all learners work towards imitating a native accent, nor is the aim of this study to validate such a claim. Accent and changes in pronunciation are often an unconscious process (Lippi-Green, 1997). Thus the scope of this study is to understand the impact of ethnic identity factors on this process.

The associations between language and identity have targeted various language groups including Spanish speakers learning English (Bartimole, 2011), French Canadian speakers learning English (Gatbonton et al., 2005) and American English Speakers learning Norwegian (Lybeck, 2002). These studies examine the relationship between ethnic identity and language, however there is very little information about Chinese English learners. This group may differ from those previously studied. For this reason, the focus of the current study is limited to the context of international students from China learning English. The scope has been narrowed in order to facilitate the measurement of phonological features. By limiting the participants to a shared native language group, the accent measure could be targeted to specific areas of difficulty in the phonology of English.

This research has the potential to inform how educators approach pronunciation education, and will also provide insight into the communicative burden experienced by language learners and how such experiences influence the learner’s progress. In short, the research being
presented holds the potential to inform both education in second language acquisition as well as cultivate a better understanding of cross-cultural interactions that are increasingly important to navigate.

**Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions**

This study was conducted using a targeted ethnolinguistic group in order to control for phonological deviations from English. Certain cultural implications of this choice may impact the findings. In addition, the study was conducted in a specific region of the United States, northwest Ohio. The local dialect was used as the norm for accent.

This research did not control for ESL course enrollment but assumes that all of the participants were interacting with English in academic fashion over the course of the academic term. Participants were not controlled for previous language training and had various levels of English upon arrival and only one participant had spent time (4 weeks), in an Anglophone country.

The study makes the assumption that international students are reflecting on their ethnic identity upon arrival to the United States and that this reflection is an immediate response to the new culture. The time constraints of the study and the small sample size may influence the findings and their generalizability.

For the collection of data, Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) was used. This measure was created to be used across ethnic groups and is not formulated specifically for participants. The survey was given to participants in English which may have been difficult for language learners. Definitions were given when needed.
Organization of the Chapters

This thesis has been organized into six chapters. The present chapter serves as a brief introduction, outlining relevant background information, justification for the study, as well as stating the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter II is a review of relevant literature and serves to construct a theoretical understanding to the research questions. The literature review examines relevant theories in second language acquisition, ethnic identity, phonology, and cultural adaptation, culminating in a review of literature that explores the link between ethnic identity and language learning.

The literature review is followed by Chapter III: Methodology, which provides a thorough description of the site of data collection, participants, instrumentation, and data analyses used. Chapter IV: Results presents the findings from the data analysis. All three research questions are addressed along with the associated hypotheses. Chapter V: Discussion integrates the findings to the sociocultural perspective and orients the findings within relevant literature. The discussion also examines the limitations of the study as well as directions for future research. Finally, Chapter VI: Conclusion provides a brief summary of the findings and the implications to education and cross cultural communication.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an overview of previous research in the fields of ethnic identity, pronunciation, and second language acquisition (SLA) to build a comprehensive understanding of the factors that impact both ethnic identity and phonological acquisition. This analysis entails identifying and structuring the research within a sociocultural framework of language acquisition (Bourdieu, 1977; Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Magid, 2005). Central theories will be discussed and elaborated including an overview of language learning and learners (Miller, 2004), the international student experience (Berry, 1997), the politics of English that shape learning contexts (Bourdieu, 1991), the phonological qualities perceived as accent (Moyer, 2013; Lippi-Green, 1997), and a discussion of ethnic identity theories (Phinney, 1989; Marcia, 1966). This literature review will culminate in a review of literature that links language and ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990; Bartolomé, 2011).

Interest in identity and language learning has grown in recent decades, particularly in the field of language education (see Norton, 1995). Norton (1995) brought identity to the foreground as a research topic by reframing the identity discourse through a poststructuralist lens. Following Norton’s poststructuralist perspective on identity and language learning, subsequent research has aligned identity to discourse (Miller, 2004), sociolinguistics (Gatbonton, et al., 2005) and second language education (Hirst, 2007; Morgan, 1997). A great deal of research has explored the issue of ethnic identity and language in the context of migration and immigration (Bartimole, 2011; Phinney, 1989; Tafarodi, Kang, & Milne, 2002) while minimal attention is allotted to international students in early adulthood (Phinney, 1990).
Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity is an aspect of the overarching concept of identity: a state of being which is formed through a process of self-categorization within social constructs (Stets & Burke, 2000; Chen, 2010). Identity also entails a sense of affiliation or belonging to a specific group (Norton, 1997). As such, ethnic identity is an aspect of identity that describes an individual’s affiliation to a specific ethnic group. Most relevant in minority group members, ethnic identity is considered a factor in overall identity that is multidimensional encompassing culture, attitudes, sense of belonging as well as the experiences of being in a minority status (Phinney, 1992; Phinney, 1996). Furthermore, ethnic identity is an ongoing and fluid process that an individual may reevaluate throughout life.

Much like the process towards identity achievement, ethnic identity is a process consisting of multiple stages. Identity has many guises that are not mutually exclusive and may all play into the identity processes of an individual. Literature on identity and language discuss multiple facets of identification such as ego identity (Marcia, 1966), social identity (Stets & Burke, 2000; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002), voice (Miller 2002; Miller, 2004; Giroux, 1986), and cultural identity (Norton, 1997). Commonalities between these diverse expressions are more significant than their differences. All of the terms above share a conception of identity as complex, multifaceted, dynamic, and contextually bound (Norton, 1997). Phinney places ethnic identity within the concept of social identity while aligning the developmental process with that of ego identity.

Contemporary discourse concerning ethnic identity is rooted in Erikson’s identity formation theory (Erikson, 1968; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Conceptualizing ethnic identity as a subjective experience of being part of an ethnic group, Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe
(2004) refer to ethnic identity as a form of collective identity, in which language is particularly significant as a marker of belonging. Considering that ethnic identity is a component of social identity, much work in this field draws from Tajfel’s (1981) social identity theory as well (Phinney, 1992). Social identity theory links an individual’s self-concept to membership in a social group along with emotional attachment to these memberships (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987). Given that the definitions of both social and ethnic identity overlap, ethnic identity can be understood as an aspect of social identity theories.

A social identity framework of ethnic identity highlights the importance of imbalanced power relations between ethnic groups (Phinney, 1990). The dominant group decides what features, cultural, phenotypical, as well as phonological, are valuable. Members of an ethnic group with characteristics that are not valued by the dominant society may experience a negative social identity (Phinney, 1990). An example is the Latino accent that is devalued by the dominant society within the United States (Lippi-Green, 1997), or the experience of Black Americans (Phinney, 1990). In response to the opinions of the dominant group, minority group members may either choose to leave their ethnic group by “‘passing’ as members of the dominant group” (p. 501) or embrace group membership through stressing the distinctiveness of one’s group. These responses to the judgments of the dominant group are salient to the current study looking at the relationship between ethnic identity and accent – an auditory symbol of group membership.

In addition, it has been well documented that identity is a complex phenomenon, and ethnic identity is equally variable and mutable (Omoniyi & White, 2006). Ethnic identity can be divided into multiple aspects including strength, feelings of pride and loyalty, importance of language as a form of expression of group identity, and degree of support for sociopolitical
aspirations (Trofimovich, 2011). Ethnic identity must also be understood as a process that takes place both internally and externally, and can be reexamined throughout life (Phinney, 1996).

While attitudes and perceptions of other groups are not a component of ethnic identity, attitudes of the dominant society may have important implications in the process of ethnic identity negotiation. Mihalicek & Wilson (2011) proposed that the speaker’s identity as perceived by others is arguably more important than their own perception of their identity. Given that speech is perceived through the filter of listener expectations, those identities imposed upon speakers are equally relevant in the process of an individual’s negotiation of ethnic identity (Moyer, 2013). As previously stated, reflection on ethnic identity is more prevalent in individuals who are in the minority. When confronted with negative attitudes from the dominant group, minority group members can respond either by internalizing the negative views or rejecting them (Phinney, 1989). These attitudes influence the individual’s orientation towards both their ethnic group and the members of the dominant group. In consequence, these attitudes influence perceptions of that ethnic group and may alienate the individual in dominant social group settings. Attitudes of the dominant group are likely to be perceived by international students who find themselves a minority in new cultural contexts.

The dichotomy between dominant and minority group status is important in a discussion about ethnic identity because members of the dominant group rarely reflect on their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992; 1996). The rapid shift from dominant to minority status which international students may experience is likely to compel immediate reflection on questions of ethnic identity and group belonging. The need to reflect on ethnic identity becomes salient when one’s membership to a certain ethnic group becomes apparent. In the context of international
students, the experience of leaving one’s own country to live within a new culture ignites a curiosity and consequently explicit attention to one’s ethnic identity (Jackson, 2008).

Ethnic identity is contextually bound and influenced by the cultural environment and others. International students are in a new cultural setting which may function as a catalyst for ethnic identity negotiation. This negotiation is likely to be impacted by how the international student perceives their acceptance in the target community. Furthermore, these negotiations are occurring at an important phase of the language learning process and could affect the learner’s progress.

**Cultural Adaptation**

Culture at its core is a notion of membership and community built upon a shared system of values, beliefs, and actions which a social group holds in common (Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). Upon arriving in a new and foreign culture, individuals may experience cognitive, attitudinal, and psychological changes as they progress from uncomfortable to feeling at home – a process is known as Adaptation. It then follows that cultural adaptation is a response experienced by individuals who come into contact with a new set of values, beliefs, and actions (Hannigan, 1990) though individuals may adapt to varying degrees or resist adaptation all together (Berry, 1997). Upon arrival, and even before departure to the United States, international students may have come into contact with American culture. People are exposed to American culture through interactions with American travelers and American mass media people, though this process is not limited to Americans alone (Mayne, 2013). People are increasingly coming into contact with people of other ethnic groups. Cultural adaptation takes place at the intersection of identity and interaction (Hecht, Jackson & Pitts, 2005). External factors manifested in intergroup interactions are important to consider given that the
psychological processes associated with external processes like cross-cultural contact may have an internal impact on the identity and cultural adaptation of an individual (Berry, Trimble, & Olmedo, 1986).

Two groups rarely meet in equilibrium. Intergroup interactions generally include a dominant group and a minority group (Berry, 1997) and the way this influences an individual’s identity may have important impacts on social adaptations, as well as language acquisition. It is in these cross-cultural encounters that ethnic identity becomes salient. An intergroup interaction is a source of anxiety (Mayne, 2013). Moon and Park (2007) cited a tendency for members of minority groups to cluster in order to counteract the stress of cross-cultural adaptation with a dominant group. In a study of Asian American undergraduate in Texas, Lee (2003) found that other-group orientation and not ethnic identity served as a moderator against discrimination. Lee measured perceived discrimination, psychological distress, ethnic identity, and other group orientation. Lee found that individuals with a strong other-group orientation, defined as a willingness to interact with people from other ethnic groups, were better able to moderate certain stresses caused by perceived discrimination in intercultural interactions. Such moderation influences social interactions and combats clustering tendencies.

Berry (1997) refers to the process of change in an individual brought about by interactions with people from another group as psychological acculturation. In order to operationalize the concept of acculturation Berry proposed two main issues that arise in the course of intergroup interactions: cultural maintenance on the one hand, and contact and participation on the other. Berry then elaborated four acculturation strategies that individuals of the non-dominant group may employ throughout the cultural adaptation process. These four strategies are: integration, separation, assimilation, and social marginalization. The most relevant
of these strategies to the current study are assimilation and separation. Assimilation is the strategy in which an individual seeks out interactions with people from groups outside of one’s own ethnic group and does not strive to maintain ties to ethnic and cultural background. In contrast, separation refers to the strategy invoke by individuals who avoid interactions with people outside of their own ethnic group and seek to maintain their own cultural and ethnic background.

The salience of these strategies lies in the relationship between levels of ethnic identity and the strength of orientation towards other groups. Ward and Rana-Deuba (1999) found that strong ethnic identity correlated with separationists, whereas orientation towards the dominant group correlated with assimilationists. Furthermore, Ward and Rana-Deuba found that individuals who adopted the assimilationist strategy, showing stronger orientation to the dominant group, had less social difficulties. The absence of social difficulties may be explained by ease of speaking tasks. This is supported by Hannigan’s (1990) findings that communication skills are an important factor in cultural adaptation.

The studies cited in above indicate that an individual’s attitude and willingness to interact with people from other ethnic groups have important implications on the process of cultural adaptation. Further research is needed in order to assess how the impacts of other-group orientation correlate specifically with pronunciation acquisition of a second language.

**Chinese Culture and Adaptation**

Despite similarities in the adaptation process across nationalities, such as language barriers and learning new cultural norms, the experience may vary by the nationality and ethnicity of the individual (Ruble & Zhang, 2013). The distance between two cultures may be indicative of the difficulty that an individual will experience when acculturating (Yan &
Berliner, 2009). When discussing the salience of culture in adaptation processes, it is important to consider both the culture being entered as well as the culture being left. Chinese culture and American culture are vastly different on many levels. Hofstede’s (2001) Cultural Taxonomy shows that both cultures differ on values of collectivism/individualism, power distance, and time orientation. In addition to these differences, the United States and China have different languages and different communication styles that interfere with cross-cultural communication (Zimmermann, 1995). These differences are significant given that they are the foundations of stereotyping and the foundations of cultural adaptation (Ruble & Zhang, 2013).

Education socialization occurs differently in each culture and has important impacts on communicative success in the United States. Yan and Berliner (2009) found indirectness, habitual silence, and verbal passiveness to lead to miscommunication. Distinctions in teacher-student interaction patterns, such as the silent learner that is valued in China and the active learner valued in the United States, leads to extra stress on Chinese students entering into American classrooms.

Yan and Berliner (2009) found that Chinese students suffered from high levels of academic stress while obtaining a higher education degree in the United States. Furthermore, Yan and Berliner found that this stress has cultural foundations in the social significance of success and failure. One example being that advanced degrees correlate with social status in China. Chinese students also face language barriers and differences in education that further exacerbate academic stress.

Several studies of Chinese students in American universities have found that social support is important in easing the stress of acculturation. In a study of the acculturative patterns of Chinese students, Wang and colleagues (2012) found that individuals with a social network
that contained both Americans and compatriots showed better acculturative adjustment. Likewise, Zimmermann (1995) conducted a study with 101 international students examining perceptions of intercultural communication and adaptations, finding that interaction with American students was the most important factor in adjustment, more important than perceptions of English skills and communication skills.

In a study exploring stereotypes of international student from China, Ruble and Zhang (2013) found that Americans stereotypes of Chinese systems can be grouped into five categories including both positive stereotypes such as intelligent, and negative stereotypes such as intrusive. Three of the five categories relate to English language skills and socializing patterns such as: bad at speaking English, only friends with other Chinese students, not very social. These patterns of stereotypes are reflective of common stereotypes of Asians within American culture (Ho & Jackson, 2001). Berry, (1997) noted similar trends, attributing them to entrenched American representations of Chinese international students as a marginalized group. It is important to not only understand what stereotypes are being imposed upon Chinese students but what factors are establishing and maintaining these stereotypes. Ruble and Zhang postulated that activation of these stereotypes impact the cultural adaptation progress and consequently communication.

The importance of interaction with Americans requires both a desire by Chinese students and Americans students to engage in interactions. This requires willingness on the part of each party to communicate. This acceptance or rejection of communication is influenced by stereotypes as well as power dynamics and accent (Ruble & Zhang, 2013; Miller, 2002). It is at this juncture when language and culture interact. Participants involved in communication are bringing with them cultural complexities that define and seek to acknowledge or deny stereotypes. These processes incorporate ethnic markers, both physical and phonological, into the
dialogue. Chinese students face both a culture significantly different from their own as well as widespread stereotypes that are strongly rooted within American culture (Ho & Jackson, 2001).

**Voice & Audibility**

Communication does not take place in a void, but is instead a socially contextualized process. Contemporary SLA research often overlooks the sociocultural context of language learning and communication (Miller, 2002). Language use is inherently intertwined with social categorization. Interlocutors process verbal cues that allow categorization based on linguistic features (Lippi Green, 1997; Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). Phonological features, often unconsciously produced, express affiliation to certain ethnic groups. These phonological distinctions may go unnoticed by the speaker, however perceptions by the listener are equally if not more important than a speaker’s own self-perception in the process social categorization (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). In this way, sociocultural approaches to accent acquisition research are important, in that socially-constructed power dynamics are significant in ethnic identity negotiation for L2 learners (Chen, 2010).

The concepts of voice and audibility acknowledge the existence of power dynamics within social interactions. For the purpose of this study, power is understood as “the socially constructed relations among individuals, institutions and communities through which symbolic and material resources in a society are produced, distributed and validated” (Norton, 2000, p. 7). Socially constructed relations are formed and maintained through communication and thus language. Concurrently language, particularly accent, functions as a symbol of ethnicity and group affiliation. The process of language learning is situated within a larger context informed by these power dynamics. The act of communication is not abstract but situated within a context that functions to empower minority language speakers or render them voiceless. Bourdieu’s
(1991) concept of speaking rights provides a framework to understand the complex process of communication. It is not sufficient to speak, the speaker must be “heard, understood and accepted as a legitimate speaker of the language” (Miller, 2002, p. 45). The speaker must be audible, and it is the listener who will grant or deny audibility. Accent is integral to acceptance as a speaker, and accents are accepted to varying degrees. For example, many Americans find the French accent to be positive while maintaining negative opinions of Asian accents (Lippi-Green, 1999, p 73).

In intercultural communication, the responsibility of maintaining a conversation is shared by both speaker and listener (Miller, 2004). This dynamic shifts in intercultural communication with the weight of successful communication placed on the L2 learner rather than native speakers. Accent or hesitation may have consequences. The term ‘language ideology filter’ refers to the moments when the listener rejects communication with a language learner (Miller, 2004). Social acceptance plays a role in the language ideology filter given that it is necessary in promoting the patience that facilitates mutual intelligibility between speaker and listener.

Given that social acceptance is associated with successful intercultural communication, an absence of this acceptance is essentially a rejection of communication and may be perceived as a rejection of the ethnic identity of the speaker. Such situations can be detrimental to the learning process by constricting the learner’s voice – spoken representation (Miller, 2002). Miller (2004) attributes voice to the manner in which students function as speakers and how they can be rendered voiceless through discrimination. Allowing or denying the voice of minority language speakers in turn presents or impedes learning environments. The creation and utilization of speaking situations is a key to oral language improvement.
The process for L2 learners to seek acceptance into social circles which are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically new is both internal and external. L2 learners may renegotiate their identity, particularly ethnic identity, as a means to seek assimilation or to externalize their differences through language production (Lippi-Green, 1997; Moyer, 2013). However this process also takes place externally, as learners are positioned by listeners through a process of social categorization (Chen, 2010). Internal factors can be measured by learner’s ethnic identity strength and external factors emerge in the feelings learners hold towards their ethnic identity which may function as a reflection of social response to their accent – a social response which is often informed by social acceptance of ethnic groups played out in acceptance or lack of acceptance to accented speech (Lippi-Green, 1997).

**Language Learning and the Language Learner**

To link ethnic identity and pronunciation in a second language is to step outside of a perspective of language learning as a series of abstract grammar rules and lexicon. A sociocultural approach places language learning within a cultural context by acknowledging that language is not culturally abstract but rather a cultural construction (Bourdieu, 1977). Within this approach to second language acquisition (SLA), “language learning is viewed not just as a matter of accumulating knowledge of discrete language elements but as a process in which learners participate in a community of users” (Gatbonton, et al., 2005, p. 508). This indicates that language learning is the process of acquiring the means to participate in a cultural dialogue and accent is often the key to acceptance within the dialogue.

If language learning is situated within a larger sociocultural context, then it follows that the language learner must be conceptualized as far more complex than a recipient of knowledge. Indeed, the language learner is an individual negotiating self and seeking acceptance into social
interactions (Hirst, 2007). This negotiation and reconstruction of identity entails questions of cultural and group affiliation as well as inherent power dynamics (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). By suspending the sounds of one’s native language the learner is hiding linguistic affiliation to the specific ethnic group that is identified through certain linguistic characteristics (Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011; Moyer, 2013).

The language learner cannot be abstracted from cultural heritage since this plays a large role in ethnic identity formation both internally and as it is expressed in the world (Phinney, 1996). Nor can the language learner be abstracted from the cultural context in which they are attempting to speak. This context is constructed within interplays of power maintained within the “politics of speaking which implicates speaker and hearer in ways that are ideologically loaded” (Miller, 2004, p. 291). Accented speech is marked by group affiliation, socioeconomic status, and gender, among others (Miller, 2002). Furthermore, the act of speaking necessitates an act of hearing (Bourdieu, 1991). The hearer can silence the speaker through intimidation or rejection of the conversation.

In a study on L2 phonology, Moyer (2011) found that the way a learner interacts with the target language is more indicative of phonological acquisition than simply quantity of time interacting with the language. Moyer’s findings showed that time spent using English in personal contexts such as in the confines of friendship was more significant in predicting language progress than time on task alone. Overall, in a context where learners are immersed in the target language, such as a study abroad experience, acceptance into the L2 community is an important factor in predicting accent acquisition as it creates opportunities for learners to hear and produce the target language. This acceptance is dependent on the learner’s ability to gain entry into social
groups of the target language; entry which can be rejected on the basis of accent and intelligibility.

Furthermore, Vygotsky included language as one of many cultural tools (Matsumoto & Juang, 2008). These tools are constructed and wielded within a culture to express shared meanings in the context of the social world. From a semiotic standpoint, culture is a shared representational system in which meaning is constructed, and “representation through language is therefore central to the processes by which meaning is produced” (Hall, 1997, p. 1). This indicates that language is the primary tool used to mediate culture and serves to connect the internal and external, given that it is through language that individuals externalize their internal thoughts and internalize external dialogues. In the interactions of the individual and society, language is the primary semiotic tool. Second language learners are attempting to cultivate this cultural tool for use in contexts outside of their ethnic culture. As Nieto (2008) states, “students are expected to create a new reality of their experience with the second language and the new social context” (p. 9). Through the refinement of new cultural tools and attempted entry into new social contexts, second language learners are linguistic minorities and in negotiation of ethnic identity to better place themselves within these new contexts.

The L2 learner is acquiring the necessary language skills to take on new social roles and in so doing, and in certain contexts the learner may try on different identities to best achieve their goals (Morgan, 1997). Often these new social roles are perceived as being tied to economic success and intertwined with power relations of the social world (Tafarodi et al. 2002). If Norton (1995) is correct in stating that the “role of language [is] constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's social identity” (p. 13), then language and identity cannot be abstracted but are intertwined in the process of language acquisition. Language learning, especially pronunciation,
is cultivated through participation in social interactions. As such, this research acknowledges language learners as complex individuals negotiating ethnic identity and influenced by external factors.

**English Language Learning**

As a global language, English is the statutory national language in 34 countries (Lewis, Gary, & Charles, 2013). These numbers exclude certain predominantly Anglophone countries, such as United States and Australia, that have no stated official language. In light of English becoming the global language of choice, the acquisition of English is unique in that learners are seeking acceptance into international discourses as well as localized English-speaking cultures.

Kachru (1997) portrays the global spread of the English language as a series of expanding circles emanating from dominant English-speaking countries out to other countries around the world. Made up of three circles that expand outward, the ripple begins from the inner circle which denotes the traditional bases of native English speakers (around 320-380 million speakers). Then it grows to the outer circle representing places where English has been institutionalized but is not the native language, such as Ghana and India (150-300 million speakers). Finally, it reaches those countries where English is merely a wide-spread foreign language such as Korea or Brazil (100-1000 million speakers) (Bhatt, 2001). Within these circles, the most widely accepted models of pronunciation are the standard varieties found within the inner-circle, Standard American English (SAE) and British English (BE) (Jenkins, 2002).

Given this paradigm for measuring acceptability of accent, learners’ progress is often presented in deficit terms (Jenkins, 2002). The aim of English Language speaking skills is often accent reduction, with the goal of ridding learners of L1 interference. For learners and educators alike “the ideal goal is to imitate the native speaker of the standard language as closely as
possible” (Jenkins, 2002, p81). Studies have shown that this goal is unreasonable, with a majority of learners never fluently acquiring the standard pronunciation; however this inherent goal in ESL pedagogy impacts learners’ perceptions of their own accent (Moyer, 2011; Lippi-Green, 1997; Miller, 2002). Given that such perceptions of accent acquisition remain dominant in SLA, a more contextualized understanding of learner attachment to ethnic affiliations may better inform how educators comprehend the task of accent reduction.

**Accent & Pronunciation**

This research attempts to better understand L2 pronunciation of English, as such it is important to understand the features encompassed within pronunciation and accent. Pronunciation refers to the articulation and manner of speaking a language, including both phonetic and prosodic features of spoken language (Lippi-Green, 1997). Saying that someone has an accent references systematic deviations in their pronunciation from the idealized norm. For L1 speakers, an accent often reflects regional variations, whereas for L2 speakers, accent refers to deviations from the standard or most widely accepted pronunciation, often attributed to L1 interference. Within the present study accent and pronunciation are used interchangeably in reference to the phonological attainment of English learners.

The deviations or differences in pronunciation may occur at both a phonemic level and a prosodic level. Phonetics is the study of segmental features that includes speech sounds (phonemes) in a language such as vowels and consonants, as well as “meaningful contrasting sounds” (Morgan, 1997 p. 433). Prosody looks at speech features that are not confined to distinct segments, they are thus suprasegmental encompassing intonation, stress, duration, rhythm, and speech rate – features that occur at the sentence-level of an utterance (Morgan, 1997; Moyer, 2013). Both levels contain important features of pronunciation because meaning is conveyed at
various levels of language production; as such they can impact perception and intelligibility of the utterance and thus communication.

Research on the phonological features that are important indices to listeners when judging accentedness indicate that accent is perceived on many levels. Among features at the phonetic level, significant correlation between accent ratings and segmental features have been found in correlation with consonants (Riney, Takagi, & Inutsuka, 2005), vowel quality and syllable duration (Setter 2006). At the prosodic level, features that correlate with accent include intonation (Kang 2010) and stress (Kang 2010; Baker & Trofimovich, 2006).

Accent, like communication, must be understood as a sociocultural phenomenon. Sounds and silence are not being produced in a cultureless vacuum, but rather provide listeners with socially significant cues that help to identify and orient speakers. Moyer (2013) defines accent as “a set of dynamic segmental and suprasegmental habits that convey linguistic meaning along with social and situational affiliation” (p.11). This definition allows us to grasp the sociocultural importance of pronunciation. Meaning is not only conveyed in words and grammatical constructions, listeners are also gathering information through indices provided by the speaker’s pronunciation. In this way, a jerky intonation in spoken English may indicate to the interlocutor that the speaker is from China (Nathan, 2008). This tendency for interlocutors to use accent in social-categorization and the impact of accent on listener perception makes it increasingly important to understand the learner’s connection to their own accent, as a manifestation of their ethnic affiliation.

More recently, the exploration between the listener and assumptions made based on accent have shown that the way we speak has consequences outside of conveying a message. Gatbonton, et al. (2005) conducted a study in Canada to assess the importance of accent
perception in ethnic group affiliation. While this study did not focus on a speaker’s ethnic affiliations, it examined the effects of accent on listeners’ attitudes. Gabonton et al., looked at the cues that listeners, self-rated as nationalistic or not, used to choose leaders based solely on recorded speech. The results showed a significant preference of Francophone nationalists to choose French-accented speech. This preference for accent suggests that an oral-ethnic marker, such as accent, influence listener judgments.

Similarly, Vornik, Sharman, and Garry (2003) studied listeners’ perception of believability in correlation to ratings of accentedness. The results showed that listeners’ acceptance of misinformation correlated with certain accents over others. In a similar study, Lev-Ari and Keysar (2010) found that listeners were more likely to trust unaccented speakers despite being told that all statements were from the researchers, not the speakers. The social ramifications of accented speech are far-reaching. Listeners use accent cues to determine who to befriend (Cargile and Giles, 1998), who to hire (Markley, E. D. (2000), and are a common basis for ethnic stereotypes (see Lippi-Green 1997; Moyer, 2013, p. 109). In such an environment, L2 speakers are faced with the choice either to embrace or attempt to erase those phonological signals of non-native speech.

The connection between pronunciation and psychosociological factors has made its way into contemporary research and with it the possibility of a connection between identity and language learning; however the nature of this correlation is still unclear (Lippi-Green 1997; Mihalicek & Wilson, 2011). Morgan (1997) investigates the intersection of identity and intonation by exploring how this process of meaning-making in a new language can be exploited pedagogically as a tool for pronunciation teaching. While Morgan draws on this connection between identity and suprasegmental features of pronunciation, further research is needed to
understand the nature of this link. An exploration of segmental and suprasegmental features in identity negotiation and second language learning is necessary to better understand the acquisition process for language learners in immersion environments.

**Comparing Standard Chinese Phonology and English Phonology**

The features that are registered as accent are contingent upon both the language of the speaker and that of the listener. As previously mentioned, the features perceived as accent are indicative of the speaker’s ethnicity given that the L1 of the speaker will influence variations in the speaker’s pronunciation – a phenomenon often referred to as L1 interference (Jenkins, 2002). This means that the speaker is using sounds, syllable structures, and prosodic features such as intonation, and stress from their native language and applying it to their target language speech patterns. Likewise, the phonological features that are most important for comprehension are determined by the important cues of the interlocutors’ first language (Moyer, 2013). English is a stress-time language, meaning that placement of lexical stress impacts intelligibility and conveys meaning. In a comparison of Japanese and American listeners, Riney and colleagues (2005) found that segmental features were the most important features in rating accent for Americans, whereas Japanese listeners rated accent through suprasegmental features.

Given that the current study involves a specific linguistic group and a target language it is important to understand the common deviations between Standard Chinese (SC) and American Standard English (ASE). To that end, the following is a brief overview of the phonology of SC and where it deviates from ASE.

SC and SAE differ both at the segmental and prosodic level. These structural differences are a result of the two languages being derived from two different language families: Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European (Swan & Smith, 2001). China is a vast country that contains many
dialects which can be grouped into eight language groups, with a majority of the population speaking the Northern Chinese dialect. These dialects share many structural and phonetic similarities, thus the difficulties measured in this study are derived from those common to speakers of all Chinese dialects.

SC contains twenty-two phonemes: seventeen consonants and five vowels. In contrast, SAE contains 24 consonant phonemes and 11 vowel phonemes (International Phonetic Association, 1999). At the segmental level, SC speakers have problems with vowels because SAE contains eleven vowels which results in new sounds as well as new sound distinctions for learners. SC and ASE share sounds that are similar but not exactly the same. These small differences are not only difficult for learners to hear and produce, but are interpreted as accent despite the phonological similarities (Nathan, 2008).

At the prosodic level, SC is a tonal language, meaning that change of pitch is used to distinguish words (Lin, 2007). SAE uses pitch changes at both the lexical and phrasal level. Word stress is difficult for SC speakers and often results in learners stressing too many syllables. SC learners of SAE also have difficulties with intonation, which results in their speech sounding monotone in English. Finally, since SC words are monosyllabic, SC learners of SAE may have difficulty linking words, opting to pronounce each word independently. This results in their speech sounding choppy.

Deviations in pronunciation that are perceived as accented speech occur at both the segmental and prosodic level (Moyer, 2013). Studies have shown that certain phonological features are more important than others for English speakers when rating accent. Americans rely on segmental features (Riney, et al., 2005; Riney, & Flege, 1998; Derwing, & Munro, 2009), word stress (Kang, 2010), and intonation (Jenkins, 2002; Munro, Derwing, & Burgess, 2010).
However, intonation may not be perceived as accent, but rather misinterpreted negatively as rude, or unfriendly (Moyer, 2013).

A brief overview of SC phonology reveals many distinctions between the SC phonological system and that of ASE. Due to the structural variations between SC and ASE, as well as their occurrence at both the segmental and prosodic level of utterances, the current study aims to cover a wide scope of possible accent features. This study will look at both segmental and prosodic features. These features include vowel quality, problematic consonants, word stress, and intonation patterns.

**Ethnic Identity and Language Acquisition**

Language is at once communicative and symbolic (Suleiman, 2006). Utterances provide listeners with overt and implicit messages while phonological features are used by listeners to gather information and categorize speakers (Gundykunst & Schmidt, 1987). It is at this intersection that ethnic identity and language are linked. Language is the medium of communication, as such it is an important part of all social contexts. Given that social identity, and with it ethnic identity, is formed within social constructs, identity is a factor in all communicative contexts (Ominiyi & White, 2006; Phinney, 1992). This is true for both first and second language speech. Identity becomes multi-faceted for non-native speakers because they are negotiating their identity within new social contexts. Language acquisition is an important part of this process.

The majority of research exploring the correlation of ethnic identity and language looks at the impact of language on ethnic identity. In contrast, the purpose of the current study is to examine the opposite effect. Rather than using language as an indicator of ethnic identity, this study aims to understand the impact of ethnic identity on language learning.
Ethnic identity and language are linked through the inherent sense of affiliation that defines ethnic identity given that accent and dialect act as indicators of ethnicity (Purnell, Idsardi, & Baugh, 1999). Prevailing research in the field of ethnic identity and language primarily focuses on migrant and immigrant communities and linguistic environments in which a language is sociopolitically threatened (Gatbonton, Trofimovich, & Segalowitz, 2011; Bedolla, 2003; Bartimole, 2011). While research supports a connection between language and identity, it is unclear if the link exists in the absence of this sociopolitical threat (Trofimovich, 2011).

Research has shown that native language maintenance has a contradictory relationship between individuals and their native language, with language serving both as a symbol of pride and stigma (Bedolla, 2003). Other studies have shown how language is an important component to self-identification which is a component to reflection on ethnic identity (Bartimole, 2011; Phinney, 1992). While the acquisition of English is considered in these studies, little attention is paid to how the second language acquisition process is influenced by ethnic identity negotiations.

Qualitative studies have explored the relationship of phonological production in the construction of language learners as speakers within ideologically-loaded discourses (Miller, 2002; Pavlenko, 2004). These studies highlight the importance of language production in terms of social constructions that inform the negotiation of learner identities within social constraints. Findings reveal that language is a means to construct and manifest identity (Miller, 2004). Language production is also important for social acceptance, which may be hindered by accents that deviate from the norm. Interlocutors use phonological cues to identify speakers, thus placing them in socially differentiated groups based on their perceived ethnicity (Gudykunst & Schmidt (1987; Purnell et al, 1999). Furthermore, qualitative studies show the importance of oral language production in allotting learners the right to speak and be heard (Pavlenko, 2004;
Bourdieu, 1991). Given that individuals are both self-identifying and being categorized by others, they may wish to highlight their ethnicity through accent, or disguise ethnic affiliation by acquiring the native accent. Given the relevance of accent in identification by others, language can be considered a strategy in negotiating identities, particularly ethnic identity that is revealed or concealed through accent (Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2008).

Accent exists at the juncture of social-labeling and identification (Inglis, n.d.). Individuals can use accent as a strategy to affirm or reject their ethnic identity as well as those imposed upon them by interlocutors (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987). Studies have shown that speakers make use of accent to indicate loyalty and affiliation (Gatbonton, et al., 2011). When and why speakers choose to maintain this indication of loyalty may largely depend on how strongly they attach to their ethnic identity. On the other hand, Berkowitz (1989) found that L2 speakers with a secure sense of self were less accommodating linguistically to native interlocutors. Speakers make use of accent to mark belonging or affiliation, a process which is informed by the speakers own identity, however this process may occur subconsciously (Lippi-Green, 1997). While these studies highlight a link between language acquisition and ethnic identity, understanding this link is important to better understand the potential impact of ethnic identity on the language learning process.

A study conducted in Quebec by Gatbonton et al. (2005) found that group affiliation strongly correlated with emotions of trust and loyalty towards speakers. This study reveals the importance of accent as an identity marker in a social context where one language group is considered a minority. For the learners in the study, pronunciation was a means of marking loyalty to an ethnic group. Those who assimilated to the target language accent risked negative judgments from their peers. While the findings from this study indicate a connection between
accent and ethnic identity by demonstrating the possible and complex influences behind language pronunciation choices, more research is needed to assess whether this affect was influenced by avoidance of L2 use.

Taylor, Meynard, and Rheault (1977) conducted a similar quantitative study with native French speakers in Canada, exploring the interplay of accent and language from a different perspective. The goal of the study was to determine what variable related to second language acquisition. Taylor and colleagues investigated contact with English Canadians, threat to ethnic identity, bilingual skills, and motivation. Their findings suggest that contact with the target language and threat to identity are the most relevant to second language skills. This study demonstrated the importance of the social-environment to leaner progress in second language acquisition, as well as the correlation between identity and language skills. Their study, however, focuses on an ethnolinguistic group that is involved in political strife and already feels threatened as a group in relation to Anglophone Canada.

Research has shown the importance of motivation on language learning outcomes, particularly phonological aspects of language (see Moyer, 2011). Given that motivation is important to phonological acquisition, the desire of a learner to maintain their accent or acquire the native accent may have significant influence on accent acquisition. Furthermore, this motivation is informed by a learner’s ethnic identity. Following the progress of one language learner in France, Kinginger (2004) documented the negotiation of multiple facets of the learner’s identity and highlighted the importance of motivation throughout the process. Kinginger’s study shows that a learners desire to affiliate or disassociate with certain ethnic groups may impact investment in language acquisition.
In a mixed methods study on cultural identification and L2 pronunciation Lybeck (2002) found that Americans who scored low on pronunciation measures cited their American identity as a hindrance. Those participants who had the lowest pronunciation success perceived loss of accent as a threat of losing an American identity, whereas participants who scored high on Norwegian pronunciation were able to negotiate their identity as both an American and a part of the target culture. Lybeck’s study provides insight into learner perception of identity and pronunciation in a second language, however the study used self-reports to measure identity. This study does not take into account processes of identity negotiation that may be unconscious to L2 learners. Further quantitative evidence is needed to support the claims of the participants in Lybeck’s study.

Both qualitative and quantitative research has shown the relationship between ethnic identity and language in social contexts. Strength of ethnic identification and affiliation impact important aspects of language acquisition such as motivation (Moyer, 2011) and attitudes (Gundykunst & Schmidt, 1987), which in turn impact use (Gatbonton & Trofimovich, 2008), acculturation (Lybeck, 2002), and ultimately acquisition of phonological features of the target language. Language and social acceptance provoke reevaluations of ethnic identity as individuals situate themselves in social contexts. Contemporary research highlights these effects in the context of linguistic groups that represent oppressed minorities. Expanding the research to voluntary linguistic minorities who are immersed in a new linguistic culture will elaborate the distinct role of ethnic identity in the effects seen in previous research. This study proposes that further research must be conducted to better understand the direct correlation between attachment to ethnic identity and second language pronunciation acquisition.
Conclusions

This literature review has explored the relevant conceptual frameworks for both ethnic identity and sociocultural approaches to second language learning. A sociocultural approach to understanding the language learning process provides a framework centered on the experience of the learner within complex cultural contexts. By exploring the primary factors in the research questions, the literature indicates a relationship between ethnic identity and phonological features of language acquisition. Ethnic identity is most pronounced in situations where the individual is in the minority group and is often not considered achieved until after the experience of a crisis that induces reflection, exploration, and finally commitment to an ethnic identity.

International students are likely to reflect upon their identities when they arrive in the United States due to the shift in social status. Ethnic identity is likely to become salient immediately upon arrival when their status within the society is put into question as the student is placed in a context where they are not part of the majority group. Furthermore, this period of reflection is likely to lead to some sort of identity negotiations as individuals attempt to situate themselves within the new cultural context. This process of negotiation and reflection is especially important for language learners because it is precisely these contexts in which language skills are cultivated and refined. In addition, perceptions of acceptance or rejection are likely to have implications in the process of negotiating ethnic identity.

The findings of this literature review indicate that there may be a significant correlation between ethnic identity and acquisition of phonological features. Given that language is an aspect of ethnic identity serving as an outlet or marker (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987; Gatbonton, et al., 2011), it follows that shifts in ethnic identity will be reflected in the strength of accent when speaking English. In addition, further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis as well.
as discover the direction of the correlation. Research primarily targets minority cultures within a
dominant language group. This environment may impact findings, thus it is important to explore
the correlation of ethnic identity and L2 pronunciation in different contexts. The results of such
findings could have important implications for language learners. Pronunciation is a
manifestation of self and ethnicity that individuals often cannot mask. Understanding the
obstacles to accent reduction in a second language could help future language learners acquire
the skills necessary to engage successfully in intercultural dialogues and to situate themselves
within the target language community.
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The primary aim of this study is to develop a better understanding of the associations between ethnic identity and degree of accentedness. The hypotheses being explored are that ethnic identity and strength of orientation towards other ethnic groups will predict degree of accentedness in a second language, and that there will be significant changes in ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and strength of accent over the first semester spent in an international university.

For the purpose of this study ethnic identity has been defined as one’s attitude and sense of belonging to an ethnic group (Gatbonton et al., 2005, p. 489). Ethnic identity is measured using Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). To fully measure ethnic identity, Phinney included a measurement of attitudes towards other groups to reflect the importance of one’s orientation to other ethnic groups and the larger society within the conceptualization of ethnic identity. This will elaborate how the participant’s orientation towards other groups interacts with the processes of ethnic identity negotiation and pronunciation acquisition. Accentedness is measured by how speech is perceived by native speakers of English. This study seeks to explore the relationship between ethnic identity and language production over the first semester of study in an international university through quantitative correlational research. The investigation was conducted using surveys and audio recordings.

Research Design

Research participants were found using a convenience sample of the target population: Chinese international students in their first semester at a Midwestern American University. Participants were approached in person and interested individuals were asked to read and sign the consent form (see Appendix D). Participants came into a private office and filled out the
survey consisting of a demographics survey and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure. Upon completion of the survey participants were given the pronunciation script and a recording device in a private office with the door closed to reduce potential anxiety. After a span of three months participants were contacted by email and asked to return to the office. On the second round of data collection participants repeated the same process, first filling out the survey then making a recording using the prepared script. Data from the recordings was combined and rated in a random order. The collected data was then separated into time points and analyzed separately.

![Research Design Diagram]

Figure 1. Research Design.

Research Settings

This research was conducted in a Midwestern American university. The most recent reports from the office of Institutional research showed that in 2010, international students represented 3% of enrollments, both at the graduate and undergraduate level. Although there were students from 79 different countries, international students from China made up 24% of the international student population. These percentages are reflective of the international student
trends across the United States. According to the 2013 Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange published by the Institute of International Education, international students represent 4% of higher education enrollment in the United States, with 29% of international students arriving from China.

In order to support the successful academic progress of students, the university offers ESL classes which international students can take concurrently with their degree program. Courses are offered at various skill levels in academic writing and academic speaking and listening, and are available to both graduate and undergraduate students. Participants were elicited through the ESOL program, thus all of the participants were enrolled in an ESL course. However no participants were enrolled in a pronunciation course.

**Participants**

Participants consisted of 20 native Mandarin speakers in their twenties, recently arrived in the United States and enrolled in a Midwestern American university. Participants were selected using a convenience sample of Mandarin speakers enrolled in the university for the Fall term. The focus on one ethnolinguistic group allowed the isolation of problem sounds for the measurement of accentedness. Keeping the native language of participants constant facilitated the isolation of deviations and problematic phonological features between English as the target language of this study, and the participant’s native language, Mandarin. Mandarin was chosen over other linguistic groups represented by the international student population because the higher percentage of enrollment at the University. Between both data collection points there was a 75% retention rate with 20 participants in Time 1 and 15 in Time 2.
Table 1

*Descriptive Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Level (Time 1)*</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking Level (Time 2)**</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Rated Improvement</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: *n=20, **n=15.*

**English Level.** The participants ranged in age from 19 to 33, with a mean age of 23 (SD=4). Participants included both undergraduate (50%) and graduate (50%) students with minimal or no prior experience in an English speaking country. Years of English learning ranged from two years of English-language instruction to seventeen years, with eight participants having less than ten years of prior English language learning and twelve participants having more than ten years of prior English language learning. All of the international students participating in this study were enrolled in an ESL course, thus were concurrently receiving English language instruction during the data collection process, however no students were enrolled in a pronunciation-focused course. In the demographic portion of the survey most participants (65%) self-rated their English speaking ability as intermediate and 90% of participants felt no improvement over the first semester. No participants reported living in an Anglophone country prior to coming to the United States, although one participant reported spending one month in Australia.

**Ethnicity.** Most of the participants identified as Chinese, with two participants identifying more specifically as Han. Participants listed their parent’s ethnicity as Asian. This deviation of terms between self and parent ethnicity may result from Asian being listed as an
option in one of the items on the MEIM. Due to the possible difficulty with the words “ethnicity” and “ethnic group” used throughout the MEIM, the researcher provided the following definition: ethnicity and ethnic group is a social group that shares a culture and history (Adapted from Cambridge, 2013).

**Social Interactions.** Over the course of data collection, participants reported a preference for interacting with compatriots. This preference increased over the period of data collection. Within the demographic portion of the survey, participants were asked the average number of days in a given week that they spent with people from different national backgrounds. Specifically, participants were asked to report how many days in a week they spent with people: from the United States, compatriots, and people of other nationalities. During the first round of data collection, participants reported spending the most time with compatriots (4.89 days/week) and the least amount of time with people of other nationalities (2.56 days/week), reporting only slightly higher amounts (3.31 days/week) for time spent with Americans. During the second round of data collection, at the end of the first semester, participants reported spending more time with compatriots (5.15 days/week) and less with both Americans (3.07 days/week) and other nationalities (2 days/week).

**Instrumentation**

**Ethnic Identity Scale.** The Ethnic Identity scale (see Appendix A) consists of 14 items ($\alpha = .90$) that encompass three subscales designed to measure multiple aspects of ethnic identity including, ethnic identity achievement, affirmation and belonging, and ethnic practices. Sample questions include: “I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background” and negatively-worded items such as, “I really have not spent much time trying to learn about the culture and history of my own ethnic group”. Strongly agree was assigned a score of 4, which strongly disagree was
assigned a score of 1. Mean scores were obtained for each participant, with high score representing a more positive ethnic identity.

**Other-Group Orientation Scale.** Phinney also included a scale of other-group orientation (α = .52) in the MEIM which measures attitude towards, and interactions with, people outside of one’s own ethnic group (e.g. *I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own*). The items on the OGO scale are interspersed in the MEIM with items from the EID scale and rated on the same scale. A higher score indicated a stronger other-group orientation. While other-group orientation is not a component of ethnic identity, the interaction of an individual within a society, more importantly with the dominant group within a society, may have important implications on both an individual’s ethnic identity and second language acquisition.

**Pronunciation Scale.** Pronunciation was measured at two levels: phonemic and prosodic. The pronunciation norm was determined by the target language dialect of the context where the learners were living which in this study was the Midwestern United States dialect. The speaking samples were recorded using a prepared script and recorded at two time points, at the beginning and end of one semester. The script for the recordings (see Appendix B) was written by the author and contains three parts that incorporate English phonological features that are challenging for native Mandarin speakers (see Swan & Smith, 2001) and prompts that elicit varying intonation patterns. Part one is a list of minimal pairs that isolate phonemes that differentiate words in Standard American English. Sample items include, *Then Den Zen* to measure production of voiced consonants [ð, d, z] and *list least* to measure vowel distinctions [ɪ, i] that do not occur in Mandarin (Duanmu, 2005).
Part two is a paragraph reading that contains sequences of sounds that are predicted to be
difficult for Mandarin speakers as well as non-Mandarin segments. The third part is a role-play
to measure spontaneous speech. Participants were given a short prompt and a list of items with
which participants were asked to formulate basic questions. This section allowed the scorers to
hear varied intonation patterns including participants usage of yes/no intonation, information-
question intonation (questions that start with question words: who, what etc.), and participant
pronunciation when they are speaking instead of reading.

Recordings were made in a private office using a cellular phone with a recording device.
Participants were left alone to make the recording and allowed to repeat the process until they
felt they had made a satisfactory recording of their English speaking. The participant recordings
from both rounds of data collection were combined and separated into Part 1, Part 2, and Part 3.
Time 1 and Time 2 recordings of each participant were played in a random order for three
scorers who rated the recordings on accentedness using a 1 to 5 scale (1 being no discernible
accent, 5 being very strong accent – potentially interferes with comprehension) (See Appendix
C). The scorers were three graduate students enrolled in a TESOL certification program who had
just completed a phonology course. Since the pronunciation measure contained three separate
parts, each part of the recording measure was rated on separate days to avoid scorer fatigue.

All raters participated in a training prior to rating the collected recordings. Raters were
not given specific features to listen for, but rather raters were asked to assign score to overall
degree of accent perceived. Prior to each listening session raters participated in a short training.
Rater training included a calibrating training session. This process allowed the raters to formulate
a shared reference point on how accent would be measured and to discuss relevant phonological
deviations. All raters were trained by listening to sample participant recordings, independently
rating then comparing scores until consistency was reached. After the training, all raters listened and scored independently. Score disputes were settled by averaging the rating. In addition to rating the recordings, the scorers were asked to comment on the phonological features that influenced their rating. Cronbach’s rating was acceptable (α = .816). Considering the small sample size, this level of reliability is not unexpected.

**Procedures**

Data was collected at two time points, spanning three months: at the beginning and end of the Fall semester. Each round of data collection consisted of three parts: Demographics questionnaire, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), and pronunciation measure. (All participants were first asked to fill out a survey which contained the MEIM and a demographics questionnaire. After completing the survey, participants made a recording using a script prepared by the author. The demographic section targeted background information about each participant including: age, home country, length of stay in the United States, years of experience with English, English level (both self-report and TOEFL scores), experience in other English-speaking countries, living situation, and social interactions.)

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) developed by Phinney (1992) was used to measure Ethnic identity (EID) and Other-Group orientation (OGO). This measure was chosen because it permits comparison of ethnic identity scores among different ethnic groups, which may facilitate future research. The MEIM contains two scales: Ethnic Identity and Other-Group Orientation. The MEIM contains four open-ended questions about self and parent ethnicity. The open-ended items were used solely to gather background information. The body of the MEIM contains 20 items (α=.85) measured on a four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Four of the items were worded negatively, two on each scale. The results from
the EID and OGO scales were divided. Negatively-worded items were reverse-coded and the items from each scale were then averaged to produce total scores on each scale for each participant.

Data Analysis

The collected data was analyzed in SPSS using multiple regression for each separate phase of data collection, looking for a correlation between Pronunciation and Ethnic Identity, and Pronunciation and Other-Group Orientation. Next, a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted separately for each variable to examine the differences between data collection points. The data analysis included only participants with complete data from both rounds of data collection.
CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

The goal of this study was to better understand if and how ethnic identity influenced a learner’s phonological acquisition of Standard American English. This investigation was conducted using Phinney’s (1992) Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM). The scores from the MEIM were sorted into two scales: ethnic identity (EID) and other-group orientation (OGO). In order to explore the relationship between ethnic identity and phonological acquisition, the two variables derived from the MEIM, EID and OGO, were treated as the independent variables with degree of accent as the dependent variable.

Descriptive Data

The participants ranged in age from 19 to 33, with a mean age of 23 (SD=4). Of the participants, 70% of participants were female and 30% were male and 50% were undergraduates, while the other 50% were graduate level students. Data collected for years of English learning was omitted from the results because the scores were unreliable between time points 1 and 2. Most participants (65%) self-rated their English speaking ability as intermediate and 90% of participants felt no improvement over the first semester. There was a 25% attrition rate between both data points.

Main Research Question: Is there a significant relationship between ethnic identity, other-group orientation and phonological acquisition in second language learning?

Multiple regression was used to test both the main hypothesis that ethnic identity would correlate with accent reduction, and the secondary hypothesis that strength of orientation to other ethnic groups would predict accent ratings. Separate multiple regressions were conducted for each time point, Time 1 and Time 2. For each data analysis, a simultaneous multiple regression was calculated using the scores of the MEIM as the independent variable and accent ratings of
recorded samples of pronunciation in English as the dependent variable. The results from Time 1 (see Table 1 below) demonstrated a significant relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable, $R^2=.51$ (adjusted $R^2=.40$), $F(2,9)=4.68$, $p=.04$. OGO significantly correlated with accent ratings, $t=-2.99$, $p=.015$; however, EID did not significantly predict accent ratings, $t=.454$, $p=.66$, and was consequently dropped from the analysis. The Time 1 data was reanalyzed (see Table 2 below) using only OGO as the independent variable and accent as the dependent variable. The results from the analysis demonstrated a significant relationship between the variables, $F(1,10)=9.94$, $p=.01$, with OGO significantly predicting accent, $t=-3.15$, $p=.01$.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>.174</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-Group Orientation</td>
<td>-1.42</td>
<td>-2.99</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OGO</td>
<td>-1.35</td>
<td>-3.15</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results from Time 2 did not demonstrate significance, $F(2,11)=.37$, $p=.70$. The data from Time 2 was not subjected to any further calculations. The results suggest that there is a stronger relationship between OGO and accent, although this relationship does not endure over the first semester. Furthermore, EID does not predict degree of accent upon arrival nor at the end of the first semester of study.
Research Sub-Question 1: Do international students experience a significant change in ethnic identity during the first semester of study in an international university?

The MEIM-EID scale was used to measure strength of ethnic identity at each time point (Time 1 and Time 2). The mean item score for Time 1 was 2.95 (SD = .47). The mean item score for Time 2 was 3.13 (SD = .18). A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to measure the change over time in EID (See Table 4 below). Using Greenhouse-Geisser correction, ANOVA results revealed no significant change over time in EID, $F(1, 11)=3.84, p=.08$. There are two possible interpretations of these findings: either EID did not change significantly or the results are underpowered due to small sample size. Given the $p$ value of .08, it is likely that a larger sample size would have shown significance.

Research Sub-Question 2: Do international students experience a significant change in other-group orientation during the first semester of study in an international university?

The descriptive data collected for OGO at both time points revealed a decrease in OGO over time (-.28). The MEIM-OGO mean item score for Time 1 was 2.82 (SD = .38), and the mean item score for Time 2 was 2.54 (SD = .18). To evaluate change over time, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare OGO scores from both data collection points (See Table 4 below). Using the Greenhouse-Geisser correction, the results showed that change over time in OGO was significant, $F(1, 11)=4.87, p=.05$. The results indicate that orientation of the participants towards other ethnic groups decreased significantly over the course of the first semester of study at a foreign university. Furthermore, at the beginning of the term, a strong other-group orientation correlated with a more native-like accent in English, $r^2=.50$ (adjusted $r^2=.49$), $F(1,10)=9.43, p=.01$. This correlation was not enduring over the course of the term. Further research is needed to explore the impact of the decline of other-group orientation over
the same time span. This decline in other-group orientation mirrors the shifting trends reported by participants in time spent with compatriots, Americans, and people from other nationalities. The data showed a decline in time spent with Americans and others, with a concurrent increase in time spent with compatriots. The difference in amount of time spent with compatriots and time spent with people from other ethnic groups increased from 2.31 days difference to 3.15 days of difference.

**Research Sub-Question 3: Do international students experience a significant change in degree of foreign accent during the first semester of study in an international university?**

Recordings that participants made using a prepared script were rated for accentedness. The recordings were rated at random and assigned a score between 1 and 5 (1 = little to no accent, 5 = very strong accent). On this scale a negative change indicates more native-like pronunciation over time, therefore decreased foreign accent. In Time 1 of this study, the mean score was 2.91 ($SD = .73$). In Time 2 the mean score was 2.55 ($SD = .71$). To explore the change in pronunciation over the same time span, pronunciation scores from Times 1 and 2 were subjected to a repeated measure ANOVA (See Table 4 below). The change in pronunciation over the course of the term was not significant, $F (1,11)=2.40$, $p=.15$. The ANOVA results show that, though pronunciation scores showed a slight reduction in accent, the change in pronunciation was not statistically significant. This may be due to the limited time scope of the data collection.

Certain phonological features were prevalent and reoccurring in the recordings scored with the highest accent rating. The most common feature that received a strong accent rating was the dropping or devoicing of final consonants. Raters noted misplaced intonation and a staccato intonation on recordings receiving a 4 score, predominantly in the spontaneous speaking portion. Finally, vowel substitution and r-colored vowels were often associated with a high accent score.
Table 4

*Change over time in Accent, Ethnic Identity, and Other-Group Orientation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Greenhouse-Geisser</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Identity</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>.47</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-Group Orientation</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>2.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accent</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken together, the results of the data show that ethnic identity is not indicative of pronunciation at any time point. Other-group orientation, by contrast, may predict an individual’s accent upon arrival to the host country. A multiple regression of each Time of data collection showed a significant correlation between OGO and pronunciation at the beginning of term. This correlation is not maintained over the course of the term, and the two variables no longer correlate significantly by the end of an academic semester. While OGO showed a significant negative change over time between the two data collection points, pronunciation scores did not change significantly over the same time span. The negative slope of OGO scores over time indicates that participants feel a weaker orientation towards people from other ethnic groups after spending an academic semester at a Midwestern university. Given that strength of other-group orientation correlated with native-like accent, a decline in OGO may influence the lack of significant change in accent over the course of the study.
CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to empirically examine the connection between ethnic identity and language learning. More specifically, this research investigated the interaction of ethnic identity and pronunciation acquisition of English language learners during a study abroad experience. This study was founded on the assumption that pronunciation and communication are social constructions and that accent is an important aspect of both language learning and speaking in cross-cultural interactions. This study investigated ethnic identity from both an internal and external standpoint. Internal ethnic identity was measured as strength of ethnic identity and external factors were measured by strength of orientation towards other ethnic groups.

The primary hypothesis that ethnic identity would predict pronunciation acquisition was not confirmed. The secondary hypothesis that strength of orientation to other ethnic groups would predict degree of accentedness was partially supported for a single point in time, though this relationship was not enduring. The final hypothesis that there would be significant change in all three variables over the course of the first semester at an international university was supported for only one variable. Only other-group orientation showed a statistically significant change over time, and the direction was negative, with international students becoming less other-group oriented over time.

Other-Group Orientation and Accent

Of the two aspects of ethnic identity investigated, only one aspect of ethnic identity was found to correlate with accentedness. Other-group orientation significantly correlated with degree of accentedness, whereas strength of ethnic identity showed no significant correlation. More importantly, this correlation is only found at the time of arrival in the host country. This
means that other-group orientation may be a predictor of degree of accentedness during the learning process prior to immersion in the target-language context. Given Lee’s (2003) definition of other-group orientation as an individual’s “willingness to interact with people from other ethnic groups”, it is possible that strong orientation towards other ethnic groups serves as a motivational factor promoting intergroup interactions. This means that learners with a strong other-group orientation are more likely to seek contact with the target language through communication with native speakers and seeking out media, such as: music, television, and movies in the target language.

Furthermore, it is possible that learners with a strong other-group orientation are more likely to seek out and engage in friendships with individuals of other ethnic groups resulting in communication that goes beyond superficial language use. This would reflect Moyer’s (2011) findings that quantity of target-language use alone is less significant an indicator than quality of language use in accent acquisition.

Decline in Other-Group Orientation

However, the results of this present study indicate that other-group orientation is stronger when the learner arrives in the host country. These findings reflect the importance of community in language learning, particularly phonological acquisition. The trends found in this study could be a reflection of learners’ reaction to the host country. Learners who do not feel accepted into the target community may feel increasingly disillusioned about the target culture. These findings may reflect international students’ reaction about unfulfilled expectations of the study abroad experience. They may have found it more difficult than expected to form meaningful relationships with people of other countries, thus sought comfort in compatriots who share a language and culture.
It is possible that the decline in other-group orientation throughout the study impacted the findings on change in accent. The results of the repeated ANOVA conducted on the variable of other-group orientation over time may explain the breakdown of the correlation found. The results showed a significant decline in strength of other-group orientation in participants. If strong other-group orientation correlates with low accentedness, a decrease in other-group orientation might slow the progress of accent change.

It is also important to consider how the acculturation experience changed the interactive behaviors of participants which were then reflected in the other-group orientation scores. Participants who initially reported strong other-group orientation may have felt more inclined to interact with people of other ethnic groups in less stressful environments such as their home country. When faced with the stress of acculturation, individuals that choose to cluster with compatriots may show a decrease in other-group orientation. In addition, more time with speakers of a learner’s first language has been shown to correlate with a stronger foreign accent (see Moyer, 2011).

The findings of the repeated ANOVA reflect the patterns that participants reported in time spent with compatriots and people of other ethnic groups. Participants reported spending more time with compatriots and less time with both Americans and people of other nationalities on the second round of data collection. The self-report data collected in the demographics portion of the survey supports the results of the MEIM-OGO scale. Over the course of the first semester in an international university, participants reported a stronger preference for spending time with people of the same nationality.

This tendency towards clustering could be a response to stress related to intergroup interactions such as difficulty integrating, lack of perceived acceptance, difficulty with
communication, or perception of discrimination. If international students experience difficulty in integrating, this could impact motivation to interact with people of other ethnic groups. This may not be due to lack of attempts to interact and integrate with other ethnic groups, primarily the dominant group, but may stem from difficulties experienced during initial interaction experiences. The shift in group status from dominant to minority could help explain the results.

When in a dominant group position, learners may feel more confident taking chances with language by seeking out and participating in cross-cultural interactions. When these dynamics shift and the learner is placed in a minority position, they are faced with a new culture, a new positioning within that culture, and the values of their ethnic group traits within the new social order. Considering the combination of these factors upon arrival, it is possible that learners suffer a loss of motivation to seek out inter-group interactions, resulting in separation and clustering within a linguistic group.

The results of Moyer’s (2011) study on language use patterns may help explain why the correlation between other-group orientation and degree of accentedness is not maintained. Results of the study showed that learners who spent more time in a week using their native language were rated as sounding more foreign. A decrease in other-group orientation and a reported increase in spending time with people who share a language may help explain the lack of significant change in pronunciation over the course of the study.

**Additional Considerations**

It is important to consider timing and stress when analyzing this decline in other-group orientation. Data was first collected soon after arrival in the United States, as such it is possible that high levels of enthusiasm promoted higher other-group orientation. Another factor to consider is the semester calendar. The second round of data collection took place near the period
of finals. Workload may have impacted the social trends of participants in decreasing overall time to socialize or increasing socialization with compatriots to facilitate studying.

The findings from this study do not support those found by previous investigations into the link between identity and pronunciation. Though Lybeck (2002) found that strong foreign accents correlated with strong identification as American among expatriates in Norway, it is possible that the relationship between learner and their identity differed to the relationship in this present study. The participants of Lybeck’s study may have been more phenotypically similar to the population of the host country, making accent a more relevant marker of nationality or ethnicity. Gatbonton et al. (2005) found that listeners associated strong accented speech with loyalty. However the study was conducted in a linguistic context characterized by political tension. In contrast, the participants of this present study were willing minorities with no outward political struggle. The relevance of highlighting an ethnic identity through accent, as a form of phonological support for a cause, is thus nonexistent.

Age is another factor to consider. The participants of this study were in their twenties, which is well above the period of adolescence that Erikson (1968) marked as the moment of most significant identity development. Erikson predicted that individuals reached a fully achieved identity by the end of adolescence, which were that true would mean that the age range for this study was too high to record any significant changes. However, given the mutable nature of identity, learners continue to reexamine identity throughout life (Phinney, 1996). The age choice for this study was based on the significance of the experience of living abroad in a new ethnic, cultural, and linguistic environment. It is possible that reproducing a similar study with adolescents would result in different degrees of changes in ethnic identity.
The results of this study support a sociocultural approach to language learning that portrays language acquisition as a process of interaction with a community of language speakers. The lack of correlation between ethnic identity and pronunciation acquisition suggests that a learner’s orientation towards others may be more significant for their language learning than their own self orientation. Interaction is more important to the phonological process of language acquisition than internal reflection. Learners acquire language more quickly when they have increased interactions with speakers of the target language. The results indicate that a learner’s orientation towards the social world is important in the process of phonological attainment, to further understand these dynamics, this line of research should be continued.

Although many of the correlations found in the results were not statistically significant, these finding can inform the relationship between language learning and context. It is not solely the language learner’s orientation that influences accentedness, but the learner’s relationship within a culturally-contextualized setting. The linguistic burden is not held by the learner alone, but rather exists in interactions, which inherently require multiple participants. When the participants of an interaction are of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, the linguistic burden becomes more evident, and perhaps more important. These same interactions are the basis of other-group orientation. The findings of this present study suggest that the most meaningful aspect of ethnic identity is the learner’s orientation to the cultural world. This means that perceived acceptance, formation and maintenance of cross-cultural relationships, and successful communication with people outside of the learner’s ethnic group are important to the process of phonological attainment experienced by learners.

As international students arrive and adapt to the culture of the United States, the process of cultural adaptation impacts learners attitude towards, and willingness to interact with,
individuals of other ethnic groups. However, contrary to the hypothesis, these changes do not correlate with changes in degree of accentedness. This may indicate that attitude and interactions with other ethnic groups are more significant during the learning process within one’s own country. Other-group orientation may function as a motivational factor for learners to seek out opportunities to practice the language.

**Implications for Language Learning**

The results reported in this study suggest that accent modification occurs before leaving home to travel. Being open to other ethnic groups, partaking in interactions with people from other ethnic groups, and having a positive attitude towards others may serve to produce the environments and experiences that help learners reduce the accentedness of speech. Although these findings do not pertain to the foreign language classroom, they highlight the importance of cultural understanding in the foreign language curriculum. Promoting positive attitudes towards, and cultivating curiosity in, other cultures may provide students with the motivational factors that will serve to improve phonological attainment.

The host institution and community need to make efforts to promote a positive integration experience. Remembering that the experience of adapting to a new culture is a complex and often stressful, the community should be open to embrace international students by providing and encouraging participation in cross-cultural interactions between ethnic groups and the community. Connecting international students to the community through events and conversation partner programs may help relieve the stress on inter-group communication.

For community members, fellow students, and faculty at the receiving institution, it is important to approach communication with nonnative speakers with patience and not be too quick to stifle conversations with nonnative speakers. Cross-cultural listening is a valuable skill
and allows nonnative speakers to share the communicative burden by making both the speaker and listener active members (see Smith, 1992).

These findings do not negate the benefits of phonological practice in the foreign language classroom. Maintaining a strong other-group orientation may be influenced by interactions with members of other groups. The facility with which learners can communicate in a foreign language will influence how easily their basic needs are met and their likelihood of building friendships with people of other groups. Berry (1997) proposed that individuals try a variety of different acculturation strategies, the success of which may be informed by the comfort found with each strategy attempted. Helping reduce accent may provide students with the tools they need to successfully acculturate without separating or clustering – a strategy that may not help learners improve their phonological skills.

The foreign language classroom should help students acquire skills that will be useful to them when they come into contact with the target language. For students who want reduce their accent in Standard American English, it may be beneficial to provide cultural curiosity and basic phonological skills that will promote a positive orientation to the target language and associated culture.

Limitations

The results of this investigation are not generalizable in isolation. A number of limitations reduce the scope of these findings. Given the chosen methodology for the study, the number of participants is the greatest limitation. Given that data was collected at two time points separated over a span exceeding two months, attrition was an issue and further limited the generalizability of the results. Due to the small sample size attrition was a concern.
The contextual impacts on speech should also be considered. Despite efforts to reduce potential anxiety during the recording process, intonation was occasionally affected by the tendency of individuals to uptalk when nervous. Due to this uptalk tendency, it is difficult to rate intonation patterns with accuracy. Raters in this study relied more heavily on segmental features when assigning ratings.

Although, the isolation of members of a specific ethnolinguistic group was important for the measurement of phonological features, this choice of participant selection reduces random selection possibilities consequently opening the possibility of selection bias. Patterns of cultural adaptation and change in accentedness specific to an ethnolinguistic group may have influenced the results. Factors such as the phonological distance between first language and English and attitudes of Americans towards the target ethnolinguistic group are important factors to consider in future studies.

It is possible that a similar study with a less visible minority would return different results. The choice of an ethnolinguistic group that is a visible minority within the university where the research took place may account for some of the findings. In a study on identity and pronunciation, Lybeck’s (2002) found a stronger correlation between identity and pronunciation. However, in Lybeck’s study participants shared a similar physical appearance with the population of the host country. Further research is needed to determine the impact of being physically marked as an outsider on accent reduction. Accent as a marker of ethnic identity may become more relevant when an individual’s ethnicity is not visually judged before any communication has commenced.

A final limitation to consider is the time constraints of the study. Data was collected at the beginning and end of an academic term which was the equivalent of a time span between two
and three months. Two to three months may not be sufficient to allow for change in the variables. It is possible that a study with a longitudinal scope would reveal more significant changes in the variables in questions.

A failure to see significant change over time in both pronunciation and strength of ethnic identity may be a result of the limited time span of the study. In contrast, the decrease in other-group orientation was statistically significant which reveals that the interim period between data collection points was sufficient to allow for change in variables.

**Directions for Future Research**

Despite the limitations of this study, the results are part of a significant dialogue about accent, second language learning, ethnicity, and identity. While the results presented herein cannot inform significant changes in the way we view the process of phonological acquisition, they can inform future research. This study may function to inform further studies in the field of phonological attainment and ethnic identity processes.

The findings for change in ethnic identity over time revealed that the ethnic identity variable was trending towards significance and the lack of statistical significance was likely a result of the study being underpowered. Given these findings, repeating this study on a larger sample size may reveal significant change in ethnic identity. Despite the lack of significance in these findings, this line of research should be continued.

Further studies addressing similar questions with individuals from a variety of ethnolinguistic groups can provide more insight into the role of the variables outside of the effects of the experience and acculturation patterns of a specific ethnolinguistic group. Duplication of this study with other ethnolinguistic groups will allow for the isolation of ethnic identity scores and other-group orientation as a general concept and not culturally specific.
Future studies of a longitudinal scope are needed to fully understand the interactions of the three variables discussed in this study. Longitudinal data will help clarify the inconclusive ANOVA results of the present study. It is possible that change in ethnic identity is a slow and longer process than the confines of this thesis was able to measure. Berry (1997) theorized that people explore different strategies of acculturation over time. It is possible that participants in this study may change social interaction patterns more than once over a longer time span. Longitudinal studies would provide an opportunity to gather data on these fluctuations in social interaction behavior as well as how they correlate to ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and accent.
CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

The goal of this study was to explore the interrelationship between ethnic identity and pronunciation of non-native speakers. The data was gathered from a selection of Mandarin international students enrolled in Midwestern University in the United States. The ethnolinguistic group chosen for the study was experiencing no outward political strife with the dominant linguistic group of the region. Due to the sample size of participants this correlational study was exploratory but can serve to inform further research.

The study explored the nature of accent and how it correlates to constructs of ethnic identity. The questions investigated include: 1) Is there a significant correlation between ethnic identity and pronunciation acquisition in second language learning? 2) Is there a significant correlation between the strength of orientation towards other ethnic groups and pronunciation acquisition? 3) Is there a significant change in ethnic identity, orientation, and pronunciation over the course of an academic term? The hypotheses being addressed were that the findings would reveal significant change over time in all three variables: ethnic identity, other-group orientation, and strength of accent, and that the changes between variables would correlate. More importantly, the primary hypothesis being tested was that ethnic identity would predict pronunciation acquisition.

This study supports the sociocultural approach to language learning. Under this approach to second language acquisition, language is understood as a cultural act that necessitates both hearer and learner. The findings discussed in this thesis show the importance of intergroup interactions in the phonological attainment of a foreign language. Not only was strength of ethnic identity not a significant predictor of phonological change, the participants other-group orientation was found to be significant. This indicates that the social factors of ethnic
identification may be more important to phonological attainment in second language acquisition, than an individual’s self-orientation. As such, the use accent to classify individuals to certain ethnic groups may be less impacted by the speakers desire to represent this aspect of themselves, and more by the hearer attempting to classify the speaker.

This investigation was built on past studies that found accent to be an important marker of ethnic identity when the ethnolinguistic group was involved in power struggles (Gatbonton et al., 2005; Lybeck, 2002; Taylor, Meynard, & Rheault, 1977). By expanding the scope of research in ethnic identity and second language learning, the findings of this investigation indicated that ethnic identity may not predict accentedness in the absence of power struggle and political strife. Contrary to hypotheses, ethnic identity was not found to correlate with strength of accent. The strength of orientation towards other ethnic groups was however found to be significant as a predictor at the beginning of a study abroad experience for international students.

Furthermore, the pattern of change in variables over time indicates that there is a need for research on the impacts of the acculturation process on phonological attainments. The findings of this study indicate that differences in acculturation strategies may be important to accent. Being conscious of one’s own acculturation strategy may be significant for accent reduction, although further research is needed to support these claims. Furthermore, it is important to continue investigating the correlation between ethnic identity and phonological attainment among various ethnic groups in order to better understand how the experience of differing ethnic groups impacts these correlations.

Despite the small scope of the study, the results have implications in the language classroom. It is important to cultivate curiosity and positive attitudes towards other ethnic groups, and the foreign language classroom is an ideal platform. For learners, it is important to
understand that communication dynamics that take place outside of the classroom are also
important to phonological acquisition. Lastly, it is important that future research not neglect the
context in which language takes place. Communication involves both speaker and hearer in
potentially uneven social structures. However, these interactions may impact overall
phonological attainment by influencing interactive behaviors of learners.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A. SURVEY WITH MULTIGROUP ETHNIC IDENTITY MEASURE

Section 1

1. How old are you? ___ years

2. What country did you live in for the majority of your childhood? ______________

3. How long have you lived in the United States? (Check one)
   ___ Less than 1 year   ___1-2 years   ___2-3 years   ___4-5 years   ___6 or more years

4. Have you lived in other English-speaking countries? (Circle one) Yes No
   4b. If yes, what country? __________ For how many years? ________

5a. What level are you in university? (Circle one) Undergraduate Graduate
   5b. (Please check one) ___1st year ___2nd year ___3rd year ___4th year ___5th year
      other: __________

6. How many years have you been studying English? ____ years

7. TOEFL score ____

8. What do YOU think is your English level? (Please circle)
   5a. Writing: Beginner Intermediate Advanced
   5b. Speaking: Beginner Intermediate Advanced
   5c. Reading: Beginner Intermediate Advanced

9a. Where do you live? (Please check one)
   ___Apartment/House alone   ___Dorms   ___Other___________
   ___Apartment/House with roommates   ___With a family
   9b. What country is/are your roommate(s) from? ________________

10. How many days per week do you spend time with friends from the United States? (Circle one)
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7

11. How many days per week do you spend time with friends from your country? (Circle one)
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7

12. How many days per week do you spend time with friends from other countries? (Circle one)
    1  2  3  4  5  6  7
Section 2

In this country, people come from a lot of different cultures and there are many words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from…Every person is born into an ethnic group, sometimes two groups, but people differ on how important their ethnicity is to them, how they feel about it, and how much their behavior is affected by it. These questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be ______________________________

For the questions below, please circle the response that best describes how you feel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I have spent time trying to find out more about my own ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>I have a clear sense of my own ethnic background and what it means for me.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I like meeting and getting to know people from ethnic groups other than my own.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I sometimes feel it would be better if different ethnic groups didn’t try to mix together.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I am not very clear about the role of my ethnicity in my life.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I often spend time with people from ethnic groups other than my own.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I really have not spent much time trying to learn more about the culture and history of my ethnic group.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me, in terms of how to relate to my own and other groups.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group and its accomplishments.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I don’t try to become friends with people from other ethnic groups.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I am involved in activities with people from other ethnic groups.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>I enjoy being around people from ethnic groups other than my own.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background.</td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 21. | My ethnicity is (circle one)  
   ____ Asian  ____ Asian American  ____ White, Caucasian, European  
   ____ Oriental  ____ Hispanic or Latino  ____ Black  
   ____ Mixed  ____ African  Other (please write in) ________________________ |
| 22. | My father’s ethnicity is ______________________ |
| 23. | My mother’s ethnicity is ______________________ |
APPENDIX B. PRONUNCIATION SCRIPT

Part 2: Recordings

Thank you for your help in this research project. Please read the following words. You will be recorded. You can make the recordings more than once. If you would like to start over please ask me. This has 3 sections: Single words, paragraph, and role play.

Section 1:

Then  Den  Zen
Thin  Tin  Sin  Fin
Spot  Sport
Am  Arm
Rich  Reach
Cat  Cut
Hate  Ate
Man  Men
Pull  Pool
List  Least
Ship  Sheep
Pin  Bin
Age  Aid
Rise  Rice
No  Low
Section 2:

Every Monday my family goes to the store. They a lot buy food, especially fruits and vegetables. Sometimes it is very expensive but they have a lot of cash. At the shop, my father always pushes a cart and we fill it with nuts, cherries, and other berries. My mom likes to eat berries for a snack. She never puts chips or candy in her mouth. She tells me that when I am her age I will not eat junk food so that I can be thin. I really should eat better, but I give my vegetables to the dogs. It is easy to fool my parents, I don’t think they saw me. When I am full I put the food into my cup and place it under the table. Then the puppies eat it all.

Section 3: You have a new roommate. Ask your roommate questions then prepare a shopping list together. You must use full questions. Use the checklist to guide you.

Name _____________________

Country ____________________

Birthday ____________________

Job ______________________

Yes  No

○ ○ Student

○ ○ Brothers #___

○ ○ Sisters #___

○ ○ Vegetarian

○ ○ Chocolate

Favorite foods

_________  ___________  ___________  ___________

Preferences:

○ Fruits  ○ vegetables (Or)

○ Beef  ○ Chicken  ○ Fish  ○ Tofu

○ Apples  ○ Bananas

○ Coffee  ○ Tea

Budget  : ○ $10  ○ $20  ○ $50  ○ $100
APPENDIX C. ACCENT RATING SHEET

Rater: 
Section: 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No accent—Strong Accent</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rec #</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rating</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Identity and Pronunciation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Meagan Hoff, a master student in the Cross-Cultural and International Education program at Bowling Green State University. I, Meagan Hoff, am doing this study for my master’s thesis. My faculty advisor for this research is Dr. Abercrombie.

You have been asked to participate because you are an international student at the university. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to learn about the relationship between identity and pronunciation learning in English for students studying in the United States. The study will look at how your experiences in the United States over the first semester influence your pronunciation skills in English. It is not likely that you will benefit directly from participation in this study, but this research will help improve the English learning experience by better understanding how social environments and identity are related to pronunciation.

Procedures: If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. At the beginning and end of the study (2 months), I will ask you to answer questions on a short survey (5 to 10 minutes) about your feelings and attitudes.
2. At the beginning and end of the study (2 months), I will ask you to make a recording of a short speaking and reading exercise (10 minutes).
3. The audio-recordings will take place in a small private office and you will do the speaking and reading exercise in private.
4. Both the survey and the recording will take place 2 times. There will be a survey and recording at the beginning of the semester. You will be contacted by phone or email to repeat the survey and recording 2 months later.
5. In total, the data collection should take no more than 40 minutes – No more than 10 minutes for each task.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You can decide to skip questions (or not do a particular task) or end participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your grades or your relationship with your teachers and classes at Bowling Green State University in any way.

Risks: I do not expect any risks with this study. Any risks, discomforts, or inconveniences will be minor and are not likely to happen. If there is an issue, you may discontinue your participation at any time.

Confidentiality/Anonymity Protection: Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. To maintain confidentiality, all participants will be assigned an identification number. All information containing names will be stored in a locked office and on a password-protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to the files.
All data collected will be confidential and will have no influence on your grades or relationship in your classes.

Information that can identify you individually will not be released to anyone outside the study. Meagan Hoff will use the information collected in her thesis and other publications. Any information used will not identify you individually.

Only the researcher and 2 blind judges will hear the audio-recordings unless we ask you to sign another permission form for other uses.

Contact information: If you have any questions or comments about this study, you can contact Meagan Hoff at 303-523-9931 or e-mail at mhoff@bgsu.edu. My advisor is Dr. Sara Abercrombie who can be reached at 419-372-3412 or email at sabercr@bgsu.edu. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hrsb@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

Thank you for your time.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

Participant Signature
APPENDIX E. HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

DATE: July 12, 2013
TO: Meagan Hoff, BA, MA (in progress)
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [474162-3] Ethnic Identity Negotiation and Second Language Pronunciation Skills
SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision
ACTION: APPROVED
APPROVAL DATE: July 12, 2013
EXPIRATION DATE: June 23, 2014
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exempt review category # 2

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 50 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on June 23, 2014. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hrsb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.