U.S. Policies and Initiatives for CFL Education

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Abstract This chapter examines historic and recent policies aimed at expanding Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) study in American K-12 and post-secondary education. These include initiatives arising out of World War II and Cold War defense needs, academic and "critical language" initiatives since the 1960s (e.g., "100,000 Strong" and STARTALK), and recent efforts aimed at promoting cultural and linguistic understanding (e.g., Confucius Institutes). The authors describe three categories of primary purpose for Chinese language learning: (1) national defense, (2) academic study, or (3) greater public appreciation of Chinese language and culture. The chapter offers explanations on why CFL study has failed to "catch fire" in American high schools, colleges, and universities. Using emerging resistance among many academicians and institutions to Confucius Institute partnerships as an example, the authors argue that CFL expansion is impeded by adversarial perceptions of China within the American institutional mindscape. The chapter concludes with a rationale and direction for increasing American receptiveness to CFL programs and other initiatives aimed at promoting Sino-American understanding.

Keywords U.S. policies and initiatives • Social and political barriers • Stages of Chinese language learning • Sampling of American CFL programs • Language planning stages • Language learning habitat • Language migration habitat • Language planning process • Language sustainability • The Confucius Institute controversy

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1 Introduction

Although “Chinese language fever” is unlikely to spread across the United States in the near future, growing recognition exists that Chinese language capability can offer a competitive advantage to individuals seeking careers in business, politics, and many other fields. Evidence of this trend is reflected by increases over the past decade in the number of American students studying Mandarin at both the K-12 and collegiate levels (Rhodes and Pufahl 2009; Shouse and Sun 2010). Various reasons have been suggested for the rise of interest in the Chinese language, most of which focus on globalized trade, technology, and the growing collective capacity to rapidly invest, compete, and share knowledge with social and economic partners around the world.

At the individual level, Chinese language capability is said to offer a competitive advantage to those seeking careers in U.S. companies with international operations. China’s growing economy, solid commercial balance, and influence within the World Trade Organization have attracted American public and private sectors to important and potentially lucrative opportunities. At the institutional level, evidence suggests that Chinese language capacity can determine the ability of companies to take advantage of these opportunities (Johanson and Vahlne 1977; Johanson and Wiedersheim-Paul 1975; Knight and Cavusgil 2004; Luostarinen 1979). Considering China’s potential market of 1.3 billion consumers, more firms are likely to consider the possibilities and develop strategies for engaging in this promising market.

One might expect such conditions to prompt a major shift towards the promotion of Chinese as a foreign language (CFL) study in American educational institutions as a means of increasing the number of students learning Mandarin. One might also expect this shift to be reflected in recognition of the relatively constrained value of knowing the language. Yet, while China’s global influence is expanding at a much greater rate than that of Japan, Japanese language study is currently roughly equal in popularity to that of Mandarin. And although Spanish is admittedly a critical language in the U.S., the relative abundance of Spanish speakers diminishes its competitive advantage.

As numerous studies point out, CFL opportunities and the number of American students taking advantage of these opportunities have certainly risen over the past decade (Dillon 2010). At the same time, one may wonder why such opportunities and numbers have not risen even more. A variety of loose arguments have been offered, for example, that participation is constrained by a lack of teachers skilled in the use of specialized pedagogy (Schoof 2013), as well as the perceived difficulty and unfamiliarity of Mandarin to most Americans. Yet, such arguments do not take into consideration major efforts in recent years to recruit and retain native Chinese instructors either from within the U.S. or from overseas (Dillon 2010). In addition, though Mandarin study requires serious student effort and memorization, the same is true for subjects like calculus or physics, both of which attract vastly more students than Mandarin. Putting aside economic benefits, given the fact that Mandarin is spoken by over one billion people, one might expect it to receive more attention in the American education system. Yet, while a number of opportunities and initiatives

have for more than 100 years aimed at and had some success in increasing American interest in CFL, their relative lack of impact seems worthy of deeper analysis.

This chapter addresses the above issue, first, by highlighting key private and public CFL initiatives in America over the past century. Next, it offers a theoretical framework for understanding particular social and political barriers CFL programs face. The Confucius Institute (CI) network and the resistance it has begun to face in America in recent years are used to provide examples to illustrate such barriers. Finally, the chapter offers a range of suggestions for overcoming the barriers. The general argument will be made that CFL programs have long been colored or obstructed by adversarial perceptions of "China" within the American social mindscape.

2 Chinese Language Study in the U.S.

Chinese language study in the United States has been, and may be, categorized in a wide range of overlapping ways. Zhou (2011, citing Tsu 1970) lists three historically descriptive stages of Chinese learning in the U.S. The first of these, the "initial" stage, ran from around 1870 to the 1930s and was characterized by scholarly learning, mostly in elite academic institutions (e.g., Yale University and Harvard University), aimed at preparing Christian missionaries for work in China. Instruction (primarily in Cantonese) was based first on the Wade-Giles and later the Yale Romanization system.

Chinese language instruction gradually expanded into a number of non-elite universities throughout the 1930s, preceding what Tsu referred to as the Second World War stage of CFL initiatives. These mostly consisted of military training programs aimed at providing troops with fast oral mastery for military purposes (Zhou 2011). As the war ended, and perhaps as realization grew among U.S. military and political officials regarding the likely downfall of Chiang Kai-shek and his Nationalist Party (Guomindang), plans were made within the U.S. government's Defense Language Institute (DLA) to establish Chinese language teaching under the auspices of the Military Intelligence Service Language School (DLIFLC 2015). This marked the start of the "Cold War" stage of CFL, which extended into the 1960s and was reflected in the Defense Act of 1957 and the Fulbright Hayes Act of 1961. Both acts provided funding for textbooks, college fellowships, and study-abroad programs. As a result, the number of college students studying Chinese rose from 1,844 in 1960 to 6,208 in 1970 (Zhou 2011).

Since the early 1960s, and especially after the end of the Cold War, additional initiatives aimed at distributing fiscal and human capital support for Chinese language instruction at various levels of America's K-20 schools have emerged and evolved. One may thus think of these various initiatives as constituting an "infrastructure stage" in the history of American CFL teaching and learning.[1] The

[1] Though it is useful to distinguish between teaching "programs" (e.g., courses and curricula) and support "initiatives" (e.g., grants and scholarships), the two terms are used interchangeably throughout this chapter.

current infrastructure stage represents a significant shift in thought and approach. CFL study, at least through the 1960s, appears to have resulted more out of condescension and fear than a desire for individual knowledge or intercultural understanding. Of course, this must be understood against an American backdrop in which foreign language study was often viewed as a subversive activity (see, for example, Angus and Mirel 1999; Boyer 1983; Krug 1969; Szecsy 2008). Despite recent attitude shifts toward Chinese language learning, unlike instruction in other more "mainstream" foreign languages, CFL programs often tend to reflect perceptions from an earlier era.

The differing characteristics of CFL programs led us to consider an alternative, non-historical way to evaluate their quality or purpose in the U.S. First, some programs may serve primarily to *promote national interest* – national security or global political or economic power. These would likely involve focused federal efforts to develop advanced Chinese ability among a relatively small core of elite students. Second, other CFL programs may assume a more neutral quality by simply offering a more general range of students an *individual academic opportunity* to acquire a form of human capital that is relatively scarce among American citizens. These would include CFL programs typically found in various American colleges, universities, and high schools. What these two types of programs have in common is they require students to master a specified amount of Chinese capability over specified units of time – and it is understood that students who fail to perform satisfactorily are likely to be weeded out of the program.

A third category of CFL programs aims to *develop general appreciation* among a broad group of students or citizens, which in turn is expected to promote familiarity, understanding, and good feeling between two disparate nations and cultures. To the extent such programs exist, they would likely be found (or have an impact) at all levels of schooling and be far less tied to rigid structures of content coverage over time.

The three types of programs described here will of course overlap in terms of structure or result. That is, even rigid narrowly-aimed initiatives may positively affect intercultural understanding and less rigid ones may promote national security goals. But the categories are useful in understanding various CFL initiatives launched since the 1960s. Table 1 contains a descriptive sampling of American CFL programs enacted over the past eight decades. Because most of these initiatives have been widely discussed elsewhere, the purpose here is to briefly describe each program and its key purpose, based on stated goals and evidence from prior literature.

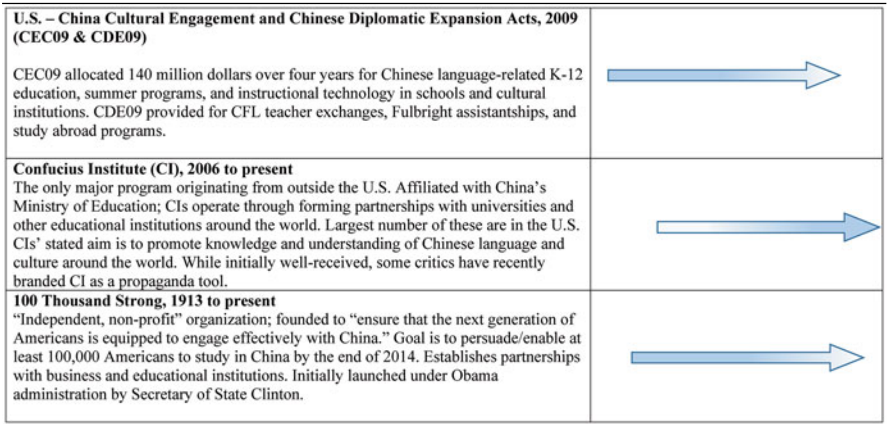
The shaded arrows in the right hand column can be thought of as vectors indicating each program's focus; that is, a darker shade suggests a stronger focus. These arrows suggest that *national interest* and *academic opportunity* have served as common denominators across most of the initiatives. Perhaps more importantly, the table indicates the most enduring programs appear to be national defense related. Another more implicit generalization evident from Table 1 is the overall limited impact of these programs on U.S. educational institutions. Noting this limitation in two different ways, Zhou (2011) pointed out the inability of these various initiatives to lead to further higher education efforts. Since the early 1990s, few universities

Table 1 Descriptive summary of major CFL initiatives in America, World War II to present

Program Title Major Goals? ➡	National Interest	Academic Opportunity	General Appreciation
Defense Language Institute (DLI) Created at start of WWII; DLI and its Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) provided "culturally based" foreign language education, training, and evaluation to "enhance" national security. First CFL programs began near end of WWII. It continues to exist today. While DLIFLC website highlights cultural learning, its national defense/security focus is evident in such statements as, "Students are expected to achieve higher proficiency scores since 9/11…" (DLIFLC, n.d.). The DLI merged with NSEP (see below) in 2012.	→	→	
Defense Education Act of 1957 (DEA57) /Fulbright-Hayes Act of 1961 (FHA61) Spurred by "Sputnik" and Cold War concerns, DEA57 sought to expand foreign language programs in U.S. schools and target talented students. FHA61 launched 24 CFL centers to support post-secondary programs, fellowships, textbooks, and studies abroad. Both initiatives said to have "raised general awareness" of Chinese as critical foreign language in higher education. The number of universities with CFL programs doubled over next ten years (Zhou, 2011, 137).	→	→	→
Carnegie Foundation Launched in early 1960s to fund university-based instructional support centers for high school CFL programs. 200 centers initially launched; all but one reserved for highly talented students; only two were still fully operative by 1980. Viewed as a "top-down" effort (Wang, 2007).		→	→
Dodge Foundation Unlike Carnegie, this late 1980s to early 2000s initiative offered support for new CFL structures within individual schools. It launched one instructional center, with most efforts directed at 60 high schools nationwide and 11 New Jersey elementary schools. Program attained some success but was hampered by negative outsider perceptions (e.g., Chinese is too hard or unnecessary) and by student recruitment difficulties. Successful Dodge schools used indirect recruitment methods such as displays, assemblies, ceremonies, or other similar techniques (Moore, 1992; Wang, 2007).		→	→
American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Works for "improvement and expansion" of teaching and learning of "all languages at all levels of instruction." ACTFL stresses that "language and communication are at the heart of the human experience" and that students must be "linguistically and culturally prepared to function as world citizens." Activities focus on building K-16 language learning infrastructure (ACTFL, n.d.). First guidelines for Chinese learning issued in early 1980s; it continues to support CFL practice and research (Xing, 2006).		→	→
Luce Foundation/Freeman Foundation, 1999-2002 Luce Foundation devoted 12 million dollars toward strengthening university Asian studies programs, especially those involving Chinese language teacher training. Freeman Foundation devoted 100 million dollars to increase China-related courses in K-20 education.		→	→
National Security Education Program (NSEP) 1991 Aims to link "national security community" and Defense Department to American higher education institutions. Includes 2002 Language Flagship initiative (LF) designed to improve higher education capacity to teach critical languages and develop a pool of qualified language professionals. Based on the assumption that K-12 language learning is "vital" to national "well-being in the 21st century," LF seeks to implement its model in teacher training institutions. 12 Chinese LF universities are currently operating.	→	→	→
U.S. – China Cultural Engagement Act 2005 Allocated 1.3 billion dollars over six years to support China-focused curriculum from sixth grade through college.		→	→
National Security Language Initiative (NSLI) 2006 Upwards of one-billion dollars to support study of "critical languages" in K-16 education. President Bush described NSLI as a "broad-gauged initiative that deals with the defense of the country, the diplomacy of the country, the intelligence to defend our country, and the education of our people" (Capriccioso, 2006).	→	→	

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)



U.S. – China Cultural Engagement and Chinese Diplomatic Expansion Acts, 2009 (CEC09 & CDE09) CEC09 allocated 140 million dollars over four years for Chinese language-related K-12 education, summer programs, and instructional technology in schools and cultural institutions. CDE09 provided for CFL teacher exchanges, Fulbright assistantships, and study abroad programs.	
Confucius Institute (CI), 2006 to present The only major program originating from outside the U.S. Affiliated with China's Ministry of Education; CIs operate through forming partnerships with universities and other educational institutions around the world. Largest number of these are in the U.S. CIs' stated aim is to promote knowledge and understanding of Chinese language and culture around the world. While initially well-received, some critics have recently branded CI as a propaganda tool.	
100 Thousand Strong, 1913 to present "Independent, non-profit" organization; founded to "ensure that the next generation of Americans is equipped to engage effectively with China." Goal is to persuade/enable at least 100,000 Americans to study in China by the end of 2014. Establishes partnerships with business and educational institutions. Initially launched under Obama administration by Secretary of State Clinton.	

have launched their own CFL initiatives, preferring instead to respond to private and public initiatives they find to be advantageous to their own institutional needs. Zhou's (2011) more powerful point regarding CFL initiatives, however, is that "political influence alone" is unlikely to change "existing language ideology or order" (p. 137).

To sharpen the point further, despite the fact that the initiatives listed in Table 1 cover the gamut of language planning stages – status planning, corpus planning, and acquisition planning – a general resistance to CFL learning seems to permeate the American language learning habitat. This is nothing new, of course, as volumes have been written over the years about the American historical resistance to foreign language learning in schools. Of great interest here, however, is the peculiar inability for CFL interest to grow beyond relatively low levels despite the relative availability of supportive resources and infrastructure. In other words, despite modest success in developing current and future CFL resource supply lines, demand for CFL learning remains either relatively low or limited to a narrow pool of elite learners. An argument might be made that this situation is similar to that of Japanese language learning in America and that both languages face similar difficulties in migrating across the American educational habitat. The more striking point, however, is Japanese has a status similar to Chinese but has lower levels of resource investment in the form of public and private initiatives and far fewer native speakers around the world.

Another way to frame this puzzle is to imagine how language education might have changed in American schools over the past 10 years had it experienced a wave of influence from a major Japanese language initiative, for example, the establishment of 100 Japanese "Confucius Institutes." Speculation, of course, does not constitute empirical evidence. But it seems doubtful that such institutes would have been encumbered by the kind of gradual distrust and resistance faced by Chinese CIs in recent years. For example, would major universities sever their ties? Would a major national faculty organization warn against forming partnerships?

Although Confucius Institutes have maintained their popularity in the U.S., the harsh criticisms lobbed against them provide clues regarding the peculiar constraints CFL programs face in the United States. We will further explore these criticisms and clues later in this essay. Before doing so, we propose a theoretical framework for understanding the problems faced by CFL programs in American educational institutions.

3 Language Survival in Socio-Ecological Terms

Sun (2010) and Shouse and Sun (2013) have presented models attempting to describe the various structures or events within language migration habitats that threaten or assist CFL programs in the U.S. Such factors can be long-standing within the habitat or can arise relatively suddenly. In a case reported by Shouse and Sun (2013), for example, a promising high school Mandarin program was suddenly halted due to shifting winds in the local political climate. While it is likely that all forms of curricular innovation must sometimes grapple with "climate change," CFL programs appear to face special obstacles, some of which may be born out of the adversarial relationship between China and the U.S.

Figure 1 illustrates how various climate factors influence the curricular decisions of individuals and organizations over the course of a language planning process. For organizations, the decisions involve whether or not a language can or should be offered (status planning), how it should be taught (corpus planning), and the procurement and management of resources necessary to maintain the instructional process (acquisition planning). In a corresponding way, student choice (in the case of Chinese, for example) involves whether to begin study of a relatively difficult language, the circumstances of their learning (e.g., to study for how many semesters;

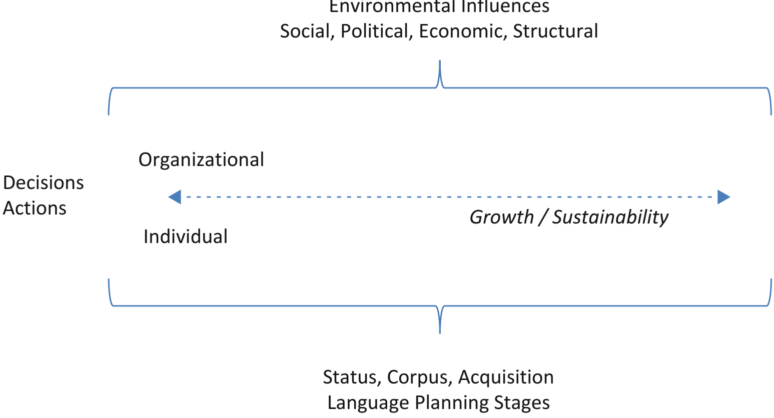


Fig. 1 A language learning environmental perspective (Adapted from Sun 2010)

to focus on spoken or written language, or both), and the acquisition and management of resources necessary to reach their desired level of success. Over time, as these decisions stabilize among schools and individuals, the language becomes sustainable within the habitat (i.e., the American education system). Sporadic, partial, or uncertain patterns of choice are likely to threaten language sustainability.

Figure 1 also suggests how these decisions are influenced by social, political, economic, and structural forces and circumstances. As Sun (2010) suggests, some categories of influence work to limit the success of any language (not just Chinese) other than French, Spanish, or German in the academic habitat. From an economic standpoint, academic investments in Chinese, Japanese, or Arabic, for example, require knowledge and decisions about long-term demand and resource supply. Students face similar decisions regarding their capacity to devote long-term effort. Similarly, from a structural perspective, America's No Child Left Behind policy and the accompanying press for math and science achievement tended to reduce the amount of resources available for all K-12 language study and no doubt reduced the likelihood that new languages would be added to the K-12 curriculum (Glisan 2005; Rosenbusch 2005).

From social and political perspectives, however, the situation becomes more complex. The languages taught in today's American schools represent nations that have either long been friendly with the United States (France, Spain) or have been defeated in wars with the United States (Germany, Mexico). Although Japanese, representing another "defeated" nation, appears to hold roughly equal standing to Chinese in the American education system with a slight edge at the college level, it attained that standing over the past 50 years with fewer public or private initiatives. Japanese may be just as hard to learn as Chinese, but it has benefited from its postwar aura of being a "friendly language" associated with scientific, technological, and economic freedom and creativity.

In contrast, interest in Chinese study in the U.S. for most of the years since World War II seems to have been driven mostly by military, security, and diplomatic needs, and the perceptions of most Americans over the age of 30 regarding China are colored by Maoism, images of Tiananmen Square, or other non-specific threats. Although these perceptions may not be as widespread today as 50 years ago, it is perhaps no coincidence that the largest expansion in Chinese learning in America occurred during the so-called period of "Chinese democratization."

This argument perhaps reads as if it is based on a thin slice of high inference data. Nevertheless, as Table 1 reveals, "war-footing" language is still found in the CFL advocacy of federal officials and offices within the U.S. Consider, for example, some of the rhetoric surrounding President George W. Bush's launching of the National Security Language Initiative (NSLI; see Table 1), under which Mandarin Chinese was identified as a "critical language" in need of greater attention in America's K-16 education system. The president stated that the initiative was "part of a strategic goal, and that is to protect this country in the short term and protect it in the long term by spreading freedom.…We're facing an ideological struggle, and we're going to win" (Capriccioso 2006).

In addition to expanding the availability of CFL in the U.S., the NSLI and similar programs from the 1960s through the 2000s sought to identify talented students for various forms of national service. The proposed Civilian Language Reserve Corps, for instance, aimed at training 1,000 critical language expert citizens who could be called on to render "quick assistance" in military or other emergency situations (Capriccioso 2006). Enveloping CFL learning in such terms may encourage the national-service-inclined student. But might it not also discourage other students from enrolling in CFL courses if they believed they might one day need to decline an invitation to serve in any sort of "Reserve Corps"?

4 The Confucius Institute

We suggest, therefore, that America's position with respect to Chinese language learning has been "cautious" and somewhat reflective of "core-periphery" cultural and linguistic tension, the likes of which China has grappled with during past centuries (Chase-Dunn and Grimes 1995, p. 396). The problem grows out of a "target" nation's desire to protect what it considers to be its superior language and culture from the influence of other ostensibly less legitimate nations, while also desiring to take advantage of their knowledge or technology. The target nation thus seeks access to, yet strives to control the expansion of, another nation's cultural, technical, and/or linguistic capital. To put it bluntly, the pattern of U.S. support for Chinese language learning suggests a desire to control it or at least maintain it at the periphery.

Perhaps the best supportive evidence of America's "cautious" position toward formal Chinese language learning comes from recent experiences with Confucius Institutes (CI). Begun in 2004 by the Chinese Language Council International, known informally as Hanban, CIs have operated by establishing partnerships with universities, major public school systems, and other educational institutions around the world for the purpose of providing curricular and instructional support for K-12 and higher education Mandarin learning. In 2006, Hanban collaborated with the College Board to establish Advanced Placement programs and exams for high school Mandarin study. By the end of 2009, 330 CIs had been established worldwide, and it was said that a new CI was launched somewhere in the world about "every four days" (Zhao and Huang 2010). As of 2014, the number of CI partnerships had risen to around 400 worldwide with nearly 100 in the U.S. Though the direct impact of CIs on the expansion of CFL learning in America has not been empirically determined, it may be useful to note that as of 2008, 800 U.S. universities, about 25 % of the total, offer Chinese language courses, and the number of college students studying Chinese rose from 24,000 in 2002 to 35,000 in 2006.

Little in the way of descriptive literature exists regarding the early successes or failures of CIs in the U.S. In a June 2007 talk at Penn State University, however, Yong Zhao, then the director of the CI at Michigan State University, described the frustration the institute encountered while trying to establish online Chinese

instruction in local school districts. The problem arose from teacher union complaints that the online instructors (most of whom resided in China) were not union members and lacked state teacher certification. Over time, the problem appears to have been solved by the university's establishment of a charter-school-type operation, which now provides Chinese instruction for students, homeschoolers, and a number of school districts throughout the state (MSU 2014). Nevertheless, the experience signified how some educational institutions might reject a tremendously valuable resource in order to preserve certain favored political or administrative arrangements.

Although the CI initiative was described as a "remarkable success" (Schmidt 2010, p. 3), by 2009 small cracks began to emerge in its positive image, as some scholars began to view it as an example of soft power (Gil 2009; Starr 2009). An old concept, born perhaps out of cold war mentality and similar in some ways to the Marxist idea of "hegemony," resurfaced. Soft power referred to a nation's use of cultural resources as a substitute for diplomatic or military force (Pan 2013). Critics suggested that CIs, through their Hanban connection, were directly linked to the Chinese government and Communist Party, and that the efforts of CIs to promote Chinese language and culture represented "propaganda" designed to put a positive spin on an authoritarian state and its soft power.

It was a curious charge since the CI mission had been fairly stable over the previous 5 years and its efforts differed little from those of any other major world nation. It is perhaps no coincidence that the soft power argument seemed to emerge during and in the wake of the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games, which were themselves often the target of critics. It was also during the summer of 2008 that the Tibetan independence movement began attracting attention from Western news media, with daily reports of riots and suppression in that region. The policy field within which the CIs needed to negotiate was becoming less friendly. In fact, according to a Pew Research report, while 42 % of Americans viewed China favorably in 2007, by 2012 the figure had dropped to 37 % (Economist 2014).

Something seemed to be in the air – a new narrative. Whereas the CI had early on been viewed as a useful development for education and understanding, it was gradually being cast in suspicious tones. Articles about CIs appeared with titles such as "The Long March," "China Flexes its Linguistic Muscles," "Mandarin Army gets 1,000 New Recruits," and, demeaningly, "Soft Power: Confucius Says." By 2010, despite no specific charges of coercion having been made against any CI, some scholars began to allege that CIs were a threat to academic freedom. The University of Pennsylvania dropped plans to establish a CI (New York Times 2012). Faculty at the University of Chicago began protesting the university's CI partnership and later were successful in ending it (Schmidt 2010). From 2010 to the present, one finds examples of statements critical of the CI that beg answers to the question of Chinese political legitimacy. A U.S. Congressional appointee and ostensive China authority stated, for instance, that it would be stupid for the Chinese government to spend money on something that did not further its interests. A professor of Asian Studies at a major university argued that under the influence of Chinese funds, faculty would be likely to bend to the demands of the Chinese

government (Schmidt 2010). Another went so far to suggest that they would ultimately feel answerable to the Chinese Communist Party (New York Times 2012; Schmidt 2010).

This emerging image of CI's ulterior motives was given an added boost in the spring of 2012 when the U.S. State Department declared that CI teachers who taught in K-12 schools were in violation of their visas, which permitted only college-level employment (Pan 2013). This was a blow to many high school Mandarin programs, in particular, the fledgling one at State College Area High School, which served the Penn State University community and whose CFL program had struggled with and overcome a great deal of political resistance over the previous 4 years (Shouse and Sun 2013; Sun 2011). The State Department's actions reflected and underscored America's guarded and adversarial relationship with China and the Chinese language. It was as if officials felt it was important to learn the Chinese language, but equally important to shelter young learners from Chinese culture – a position very similar to the "core-periphery" problem faced by China as it first began to experience Western influence.

In the summer of 2014, the American Association of University Professors issued a statement calling on colleges and universities to cancel their agreements with the CI (Graham 2014). Later that summer Penn State University did just that. The university gave no reason for the cancellation, but one journalist reported that the dean of PSU's Liberal Arts College believed the two institutions did not share "similar goals" (Calderaro 2014). And while the CI's mission focused on language and humanities, Penn State and a number of its professors wanted to direct CI resources toward work in science, politics, and the environment (Calderaro 2014).

Although the changing policy climate described here is quite difficult to interpret, one gets the sense that the attacks on the CI resulted from the convergence of two troublesome streams. The first of these was the resurfacing of old, deeply embedded fears of and biases against the People's Republic of China. For many, even with higher levels of education, China is "the sleeping giant," "poised to replace the U.S. as world leader," "flexing its linguistic muscles," and is often portrayed as a not-quite-fully-legitimate nation based on various allegations of human rights violations.

The second stream involves the fact that the CI is fundamentally oriented towards teaching, while American university faculty, certainly at larger institutions, are mainly focused on research and the acquisition of grant funds for sustaining it. Thus, one possible reason for the gradual resistance to the CI at many universities may involve a gradual realization among some liberal arts faculty that CI collaborative projects and funding would be limited to language and cultural education activity: courses, teacher training, symbolic/ceremonial activity, workshops, and the like. The CI's language/culture focus simply may not fit well with the expectations of a Research-1 university and particularly among faculty whose work might involve a criticism of the People's Republic of China. The mismatch of expectations, however, would fit quite well with – and may have fueled – the new narrative that casts the CI as a "threat to academic freedom" (Graham 2014).

Though we find the "academic freedom" narrative to be readily refutable, the point here is not to debate it. Rather, it is to demonstrate the serious sociocultural and political threats to CFL programs seeking to break through the parameters of American national interest. In the case of the Confucius Institute, one is left with the sense that threats increase as such programs appear to become more successful. Though programs like STARTALK or Language Flagship may be exceptions, both work under the auspices and control of federal authority and the officials who approve the proposals. In contrast, Confucius Institutes operate relatively independently from U.S. authority and can potentially influence substantial numbers of American students over a relatively short period of time. As Zhao and Huang (2010) suggest, a great deal of cultural resistance originates from the idea of China having such extensive unfettered access to or influence on American education and society.

Obviously not all CFL programs are under federal control, such as most of those that have gained a foothold in American K-16 educational institutions. But the CI's recent experience, given the tremendous resources it could offer, suggests the existence of an invisible veil that, despite official statements to the contrary, marginalizes Chinese language study and separates it from the American social and educational mindscape.

5 Conclusions and Suggestions for Adaptive Strategies

Overall, the status of CFL learning in American schools appears modest at best, though one can certainly be encouraged by its growth in recent years. Nevertheless, China's growing world influence, the vast usage of its language, and the ever-shrinking global village in which we live warrant further critical examination of the ecological barriers faced by CFL programs in the United States. Despite wide recognition of the academic and professional value of this learning, CFL programs remain a "niche species" within the organizational environment of U.S. education, highly sensitive to changes in social and political attitudes.

Although there is tremendous potential for the growth of CFL programs in the U.S., this growth will not come about simply by further development of the resource infrastructure. More likely, it will occur as American officials, policy makers, and the general public gradually begin to recognize China as an equal, legitimate, and positive actor in global society. In that light, it is of great note that the one initiative most closely aligned with this goal, and the one that arguably has been most successful in reaching it, is the one currently meeting the greatest institutional and governmental resistance.

Posing the problem as a question, if current U.S. education policy sincerely aims to expand CFL learning, would it be more beneficial to offer programs at the system's periphery (e.g., focused opportunity for a relatively narrow group of interested and talented college students who might later serve the "public interest") or at the system's core (e.g., direct grants to states and school districts to help create

broader K-12 CFL programs)? Certainly, the amount of federal funding made available over the past 20 years might have helped establish a very effective Chinese language “race to the top.” Such an effort might have included encouraging states to offer alternative forms of teacher certification so as to allow native Mandarin speakers with adequate English skills to teach in elementary or secondary classrooms. International graduate students from local universities might even serve as a source of qualified teachers. The implementation of such approaches, however, will depend on strong, vocal leaders who can advocate for a change in American attitudes toward China and who can effectively champion the benefits of Chinese study.

Before suggesting further strategies for increasing CFL learning in the U.S., we would like to clarify our biases. First, we find the scant attention devoted to foreign language learning in American school curricula to be quite troubling in light of the attention given to various pronouncements about America’s need for world class schools. Second, we find the intensely unequal importance placed on subjects like math and science vis a vis foreign language study to be void of legitimacy. Finally, given our increasingly shrinking world, we find the dearth of opportunity for American young people to study the planet’s most widely spoken language to be quite absurd. Besides the value accrued by individual students who choose to study Mandarin, expanding the collective opportunity for its study should certainly contribute to America’s global capacity.

For half a century America’s education policy makers applied similar logic as they sought to intensify standards and requirements in mathematics and science. Is seems rather strange, however, to imagine that math and science represent the primary frontiers of human knowledge and understanding when we have yet to fully explore the vast frontiers of human language and culture. We thus value and support the continuation of federal and state initiatives designed to promote the expansion of CFL initiatives in the U.S.

Having said that, we still grapple with the reality that as an American education policy “species,” Mandarin Chinese faces arduous challenges within the organizational habitat of American public schooling. In some ways, one might compare it to a plant that takes years of expensive cultivation and care, produces fruit that some find delicious, some find unpleasant, and many others are reluctant to taste. On the other hand, the plant continues to grow and more are giving it a try. Its popularity grows slowly. However, marketing is highly dependent on creative agribusiness, especially at the status and acquisition planning stages.

As argued earlier, decisions about language learning are influenced not just by resource availability, but also by student demand. In other words, even if local decision makers view CFL programs as rational, practical, and feasible, they may remain reluctant to implement them for subjective or emotional reasons. For example, how do they, their communities, or their students feel about learning Chinese? Does it fit the local organizational or individual mindscape? Such non-rational considerations may arise or shift over time, thereby influencing decisions at the acquisition planning stage.

To put it in different terms, French, German, and Latin have survived in American schools less because of their practical usefulness and more because of their

social-psychological fit. They are perceived to be "natural" species around which a rationalistic façade has been constructed over time. This leads us to suspect that supply-based strategies, especially at the periphery of the education system, while useful, can only partially contribute to expanding CFL programs in American schools. At the same time, demand-based strategies may have limited success if they appeal solely to the rational benefits of CFL learning (e.g., it can help one have a successful career).

Assuming the non-rational benefits of Mandarin study can be identified, can they be expressed in a way that promotes greater student interest in studying the world's most widely spoken language? Can Mandarin be marketed using techniques of the advertising industry, which aim to recruit and retain customers through social-psychological bonds? By selling the "sizzle" as much as the "steak" (Clark and Smith 2008), French language learning in the U.S. has, for example, for many years benefited from its reputation as a language of sophistication, intelligence, and romance. Latin holds its place in scholastic hearts in part by the aura of intellectual distinction it bestows on its students. Do ways exist to bestow on Chinese study a similar unique and attractive sense of distinction for those who accept its challenges? A full exploration of this possibility lies beyond the scope of this chapter. But we would be remiss if we failed to point out its vast and unexplored potential.

Finally, we believe in the value and legitimacy of the Confucius Institute. Though CIs around the U.S. may vary in focus or effectiveness, they nevertheless represent the best available initiative for exploring and improving cultural and linguistic understanding between two great nations. We encourage students, scholars, educators, and citizens to critically examine and, where appropriate, point out the failings of the academic freedom complaints against the CIs. The point here is not to cheerlead for a cause, but to remind readers how easy it often is for even well-intentioned and educated individuals to fail to question the popular narratives that can stand in the way of social understanding and – ultimately – Chinese foreign language learning.

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