
1-6-2024

Associating Academic Identity with Language Socialization in Virtual Community: A Case Study of a Chinese Graduate Student's Learning Experiences in Religion Studies

Xiaolong Lu

The University of Arizona, charmander@email.arizona.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Commons, Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons, Buddhist Studies Commons, Curriculum and Instruction Commons, Higher Education Commons, International and Comparative Education Commons, Online and Distance Education Commons, and the Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons

Recommended APA Citation

Lu, X. (2024). Associating Academic Identity with Language Socialization in Virtual Community: A Case Study of a Chinese Graduate Student's Learning Experiences in Religion Studies. *The Qualitative Report*, 29(1), 141-161. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2024.5649>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Associating Academic Identity with Language Socialization in Virtual Community: A Case Study of a Chinese Graduate Student's Learning Experiences in Religion Studies

Abstract

This longitudinal case study explored the academic identity and language socialization of a Chinese graduate student enrolled in an online religion course at a U.S. university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected via online classroom observations, oral interviews, and artifacts. The theoretical framework was taken from language socialization and identity, together with positioning theory. The study differs from previous research, arguing that instead of language competence, the constructed academic identity is occasionally crucial for the successful academic discourse socialization of international students in bilingual and virtual settings. Moreover, the inclination toward interactive positioning between students and instructors can arise and advance in virtual academic communities and, while students' academic identities might be resistant to change, they can be negatively impacted by disorganized course design. The conclusion sheds light on first and second language socialization through which international graduate students can navigate and maintain their academic identities within digitally mediated and multilingual learning environments.

Keywords

Chinese graduate student, academic identity, language socialization, positioning theory, bilingual and virtual education

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Associating Academic Identity with Language Socialization in Virtual Community: A Case Study of a Chinese Graduate Student's Learning Experiences in Religion Studies

Xiaolong Lu

University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, USA

This longitudinal case study explored the academic identity and language socialization of a Chinese graduate student enrolled in an online religion course at a U.S. university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Data were collected via online classroom observations, oral interviews, and artifacts. The theoretical framework was taken from language socialization and identity, together with positioning theory. The study differs from previous research, arguing that instead of language competence, the constructed academic identity is occasionally crucial for the successful academic discourse socialization of international students in bilingual and virtual settings. Moreover, the inclination toward interactive positioning between students and instructors can arise and advance in virtual academic communities and, while students' academic identities might be resistant to change, they can be negatively impacted by disorganized course design. The conclusion sheds light on first and second language socialization through which international graduate students can navigate and maintain their academic identities within digitally mediated and multilingual learning environments.

Keywords: Chinese graduate student, academic identity, language socialization, positioning theory, bilingual and virtual education

Introduction

The role of identity in language socialization currently plays an important role in the evaluation of graduate students' success in foreign academic communities (Wu, 2017). Norton (2000) used the term "identity in language learning" to "reference how people understand their relationships to the world, how these relationships are constructed across time and space, and how people understand possibilities for the future" (p. 45). In academic settings, the emergence of identity can be observed as a dynamic process, wherein students actively navigate the discourses of knowledge and master narratives while engaging in research activities (Giampapa, 2011). Academic identity concerns a shared set of external attributes that enable individuals to develop their sense of professionalism in academia, based on their past experiences and their understanding of the current situations (e.g., Billot, 2010; Hoang & Pretorius, 2019; Sachs, 2001). The importance of academic identity in second language (L2) socialization studies motivates the investigation of different groups of international students in their pursuit of a degree and represents a dynamic configuration of elements that are simultaneously internal and external, and involve social and disciplinary contexts.

Since the early 1980s, Chinese graduate students have formed a growing group within the student body in U.S. universities (Wan, 1999). Represented as international groups coming from East Asia, Chinese students have attracted researchers' attention because they bring their own cultures of learning, socializing, and communicating, and are being identified as new

community members with varying degrees of mismatch to the cultures of the Western host countries (Holmes, 2005). Previous studies have long asserted that students who received traditional Chinese education tend to display more reticence in classrooms, exhibit less expressive behavior, and demonstrate a greater reluctance to provide critical feedback. This is attributed to the influence of the Confucian-heritage culture, which emphasizes maintaining harmony in relationships, advocating politeness, and practicing moderation towards teachers to preserve face (e.g., Bao & Pham, 2021; Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998; Holmes, 2004; Li, 2016; Wang et al., 2012). This trend might be further intensified during the pandemic, as Baber (2022) reported, the COVID-19 lockdown resulted in Asian students' adopting social distancing measures, leading to a reduction in socializing opportunities both in local colleges and online classes.

Although the development of graduate students' academic identities has been well documented in higher education (e.g., Ai, 2017; Foot et al., 2014; Frick & Brodin, 2020; Halic et al., 2009; Jensen & Jetten, 2016; Pretorius & Macaulay, 2021), the interplay between graduate students' online socialization and their developing identities as academics and scholars remains an understudied area in research. Virtual communities provide unique learning spaces for graduate students to navigate across contexts of socialization in the locality of the nation-state, and to constitute their identities and life trajectories through the practice of academic discourse. Research on social practices (e.g., Beckett et al., 2010; Heidari et al., 2023; Lam, 2004; Miller, 2017; Thorne et al., 2009, 2015) in virtual communities has also shown that language use is associated with the construction of social beliefs, cultural representations, ethnic identifications, and collaboration awareness. However, it remains unclear how Chinese master students as a specific social group negotiated their academic identities in online learning experiences, during their professional transition from being undergraduate students (greenhand researchers) to becoming doctoral students (know-how researchers). The goal of this study is to provide a deep understanding of how a Chinese graduate student' academic identity was constructed in the U.S. higher education, through the investigation of his classroom socialization in a remote and bilingual context during the COVID-19 crisis. The single case study aims to address the following questions:

- (1) What constituted the academic identity of the Chinese graduate student during his online learning experiences in bilingual religion courses?
- (2) Did the student's academic identity impact his language socialization in the virtual community? If so, how?

Literature Review

In educational linguistics research, the concepts of language socialization, identity, and positioning have traditionally been examined in isolation from each other. In this section, it is essential to clearly define each concept while emphasizing their interrelationships within the multilingual context of learning experiences.

Framework of L2 Socialization, Identity, and Positioning

First, language socialization provides a multilingual context for learners to identify their roles through interactions with community members. Early studies (e.g., Heller, 1987; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) in L1 education underscored the interconnectedness of language socialization and identity, suggesting that native speakers, including children and adults, constructed their social identities through interactions with others, in various contexts and

timeframes. This is also evident in L2 socialization, as Norton (2000) argued, successful language learning relies on daily participation in communities, as much as in language classrooms, thus highlighting the influence of social context on L2 learners' engagement with educational practices. Likewise, Watson-Gegeo (2004) and Duff (2010a) valued the role of language socialization in L2 learning, contending that language socialization sets the groundwork for exploring foreign learners' experiences shaped by the interaction. Learners' socialization as a topic aligns with "situated learning" discussed by Lave and Wenger (1991), where newcomers' legitimate peripheral participation emphasizes the significance of agency in becoming community members. Simultaneously, dedicated learners are apprenticed into the community of practice through their full engagement in language practices. Here, agency signals "people's ability to make choices, take control, self-regulate, and thereby pursue their goals as individuals leading, potentially, to personal or social transformation" (Duff, 2012, p. 414). Agency is the capacity to act according to one's will, which is important for constructing one's identity in language socialization (e.g., Duff & Doherty, 2015; Fogle, 2012). In multilingual learning contexts, international graduate students, whether as peripheral or core participants, can exercise different degrees of agency when socializing in the academic community of practice.

Moreover, higher education offers learners the space and time to engage in academic discourse socialization, fostering the negotiation and construction of their identities. Hall (1996) argued, "identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies" (p. 4). Similarly, Moore (2004) stressed the significant role of education in shaping personal identity. He posited that the process of education facilitated the gradual integration of social and cultural discourses into one's consciousness, thereby providing a framework for individual identity construction. In an autoethnographic study, Ai (2017) explored how his academic identity as an international doctoral student was shaped while studying abroad in Australia, amidst a different educational context and sociocultural environment. Initially apprehensive about research, Ai found support from his advisor, who played a crucial role in guiding his transition from an apprentice to an independent scholar in this globalized higher education system. Shifts in educational or academic contexts can thus significantly impact the negotiation and reconstruction of one's identity, potentially yielding both positive and negative effects, especially for international students from different cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, learners shape their academic identities through situational positioning in discourse (e.g., Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Positioning theory sees position as a dynamic aspect of identity, and learners can be positioned in specific ways in defining storylines and acts (Slocum & Langenhove, 2004). In a multilingual context, Duff (2010b) regarded positioning as a dynamic and socially situated process in academic communities in which "students are positioned by academic discourse, institutions, and interactions with others" (p. 186). Morita's (2004) longitudinal case study examined six Japanese women's academic discourse socialization in graduate and undergraduate courses at a Canadian university. Her study revealed that these international students enacted their multiple identities while struggling with power relations and competing agendas, and situationally positioned themselves as less competent members, valued members, outsiders, or non-English speakers.

Another aspect of positioning theory concerns interactive positioning in a broader social context. Clarke (2006) conducted a study on literature discussion groups, proposing that positioning takes place not only within interactive classroom discussions (micro-level) but also extends to gender and social class (macro-level) that made positions available to social subjects. As positions are interconnected with interpersonal relationships and social

interactions, we can assign positions to others through interactive positioning (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999). Harré (2012) argued that interactive positioning concerns what we believe others should do in terms of rights and duties. His definition is speaker-centered, indicating “my rights are what you or they must do for me, whereas my duties are what I must do for you or them” (p. 197). According to his argument, students have the right to be taught, and teachers hold the duty to teach. Consequently, positioning theory in higher education seeks to explore the distribution of rights, duties, and obligations among L2 learners and teachers in their academic discourse socialization. Studies of positioning and identity have also posited that learners might adopt or resist the position(s) imposed on them. Rex and Schiller (2009) demonstrated that the way teachers responded to students would result in them accepting or resisting the teachers’ choices. Kayi-Aydar (2018) also found that a student resisted the teacher’s position when the student could not comprehend an intermediate-level text, and repositioned himself by indicating that he had the proficiency level to be a confident learner. The acceptance or resistance of a position thus depended on the matchability between the other’s position and the student’s sense of self.

Overall, three theoretical models are closely associated with sociocultural approaches to examining international students’ enduring academic activities. Kulick and Schieffelin (2004) explained that L2 socialization involves the identity construction process for L2 learners to become “culturally intelligible subjects” (p. 351) and recommended an ethnographic and longitudinal approach for studying language socialization. Friedman (2010) also connected language socialization and identity, highlighting that acquiring legitimate ways of speaking and acting within a community depended on adopting identities during everyday interactions. This idea related to Lave and Wenger’s (1991) community of practice, where multilingual learners with a shared sense of belonging worked together on joint enterprises, utilizing shared understandings and resources. These studies demonstrate that employing language socialization and identity can culturally and historically examine the impact of L2 learners’ self-perception on their participation and engagement within local communities. Moreover, the theory of positioning adds another perspective for the study of language socialization by focusing on “what a person may do and may not do” in each context (Harré et al., 2009, p. 9). Kayi-Aydar (2018) underscored the role of positioning in L2 socialization by stating that the positions of students and teachers enabled observations of how they used language and exercised agency to construct their identities in different contexts; she also suggested that position was used to capture the dynamic aspects of identity and that the way speakers shaped their identities could be reflected in how they positioned themselves agentively in discourses.

Online classroom learning presents a unique context, distinct from traditional in-person classes, for investigating how students and instructors perceive and define their roles and responsibilities in power-dynamic interactions. Language socialization holds the potential to shape how L2 learners situationally position themselves and others in academic discourses, therefore contributing to their identity construction. It is therefore worth investigating how a Chinese international student with a different cultural and educational background negotiated and constructed his academic identity in the year-long online learning experiences, with reference to the three sociocultural models.

Research on International Students’ Academic Identities in Language Socialization

International students’ academic identities can be constructed through L2 or foreign language socialization, which indicates “the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group” (Duff, 2007, p. 310). Numerous qualitative studies have generally examined international students’ academic identities while attending courses in English-speaking

countries (e.g., Burhan-Horasanlı, 2022; Gomes et al., 2014; Okuda & Anderson, 2018; Seloni, 2012; Wette & Furneaux, 2018). Other research (e.g., Ai, 2017; De Costa et al., 2022; González, 2006; Halic et al., 2009; Jazvac-Martek, 2009; Morita, 2004) has focused on international graduate students' participation and socialization, as well as their identity construction in and outside of classrooms, showing that non-native graduate students encountered a variety of challenges regarding academic discourse socialization in foreign countries. For example, Morita (2004) analyzed how Japanese learners of English negotiated their participation and membership in their L2 classroom communities; her three case studies demonstrated that Japanese graduate students encountered major challenges when negotiating competence identities and power relations. Morita also found that native-speaking students or instructors were not only the dominant group in academic activities but were also a group of peripheral participants who needed to be socialized in increasingly heterogeneous communities. González (2006) examined a diverse group of Latina doctoral students' experiences of academic socialization; the findings indicated that the students experienced immense challenges (such as racism and injustice) in academic socialization in the United States, but some of them successfully resisted the imposition of White privilege and indicated their Latina identity linguistically with the support of like-minded scholars. Similarly, Halic et al. (2009) investigated the experiences of eight non-English-speaking graduate students regarding language, culture, and identity at a U.S. university. Their studies revealed that participants with diverse language backgrounds perceived English as both a barrier and a means of access to academic success. Moreover, peers and instructors sometimes perceived these participants as lacking the knowledge and cognitive abilities to be legitimate contributors to the learning environment. It is suggested that educators working with non-native English-speaking international students should address not only these students' academic issues, but also their relational and affective issues.

However, there is a scarcity of studies examining the academic socialization of Chinese graduate students in virtual communities. Previous studies have mainly focused on Chinese students' learning experiences and their sociocultural factors in distant higher education settings. Ku and Lohr (2003) reported on five Chinese graduate students' perceptions and attitudes toward their first online learning experiences and found that, although fewer language barriers existed, students who were isolated suffered from a deficiency of language and cultural exchange. Likewise, Thompson and Ku (2005) examined the learning experiences and attitudes of seven Chinese graduate students and suggested that a lack of feedback and cultural exchange with their peers and instructors challenged Chinese students in online learning. By focusing on sociocultural factors, Zhao and McDougall (2008) found a positive attitude among the six Chinese graduate students engaged in asynchronous online learning at a Canadian university; they summarized the cultural factors as "unfamiliarity with the disciplinary culture, ignorance of Western social life, the Chinese cultural personality, attitudes towards presenting opinions in public" (p. 74). Sadykova and Meskill (2019) also discussed the accommodations made by a Chinese graduate student to mitigate these challenges (for example, difficulties in accepting Western Socratic approaches) in digitally mediated language socialization. The study suggested that U.S. instructors should engage directly to initiate cross-cultural discussions to provide Chinese international students with rich opportunities to understand the distinction between the Confucian and Socratic academic cultures. These findings are consistent with Zhang's (2013) conclusion, namely that Chinese students' online learning and engagement were influenced by high power-distance cultures such as the Confucian-heritage culture, in which people are taught to respect hierarchical structures, including higher social position, age, and authority, in contrast to those in low power-distance cultures, for example, the less authoritative position of educators in Western cultures.

The studies touched upon Chinese graduate students' academic socialization and their experiences with online learning in study abroad contexts; however, they have not investigated whether or how Chinese graduate students construct their academic identities by socializing in a specific disciplinary area, particularly when studying less popular majors. Blackmore (2007) argued that discipline was closely associated with professional identities and was a significant aspect in understanding academic practice. Kayi-Aydar and Miller (2018) emphasized the similar need for studying positioning and identity in online academic contexts, particularly in less-studied content areas. This study hence explored the academic identity development of a Chinese graduate student majoring in Chinese religion, influenced by academic discourse socialization. Specifically, the student's identity was examined in the religious studies community during online learning, with a primary focus on the formation of academic identity in the pandemic and its impact on online socialization as the main unit of analysis.

Methodology

This paper employed a qualitative, single case study approach (Duff, 2014) to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of a Chinese graduate student's learning experiences and perspectives. In keeping with qualitative research traditions, I provided a thick description of the researched phenomenon. To do this, I engaged in a detailed analysis of the complexity of the participant's academic identity construction as influenced by his academic discourse socialization. I also focused on the year-long duration of the participant's learning experiences and the online bilingual context as a "bounded" case (Ellinger et al., 2005, p. 328) to capture possible changes in his academic identity construction over time. Achieving this goal required the triangulation of classroom observations, oral interviews with the participant, his classmates and the instructor, and the documentation of artifacts such as assignments and the course syllabus.

Context and Participant

This longitudinal study (spring 2020 to spring 2021) focused on a Chinese graduate student's online Buddhism seminar course (via Zoom) at a large, research-oriented university in the United States. This graduate-level course was first scheduled in spring 2020 and continued until spring 2021. A weekly online meeting was provided by a Chinese instructor who used both English and Chinese in his talks. The reason for bilingual instruction was that most of the content was associated with classical Chinese literature, and all the students were native Chinese speakers using English as an L2. Researching online classrooms at the university is important because the academic identity of learners of Buddhism has not yet been studied, particularly in the context of online bilingual education.

The participant, Dan (pseudonym), was selected via purposeful sampling (Daniel, 2012) because the study required an exploratory purpose to obtain a complete picture of how this student constructed his academic identity during online bilingual instruction. Also, the academic expertise and personal experiences of the participant (a Chinese graduate student in the U.S. higher education, with Chinese as his native language and Chinese religion as his major) could provide a rich and unique response to my inquiry regarding identity negotiation in academic discourse socialization. A single case study was finally selected due to financial constraints and the lack of in-person contact during the pandemic.

Dan's learning experiences and educational background were distinct and representative for this study; he agreed to participate in my data collection following an email invitation. Dan was born in China and had Mandarin Chinese as his L1 and English as his L2. After studying agriculture at a university in China, he made the decision to transfer to the

United States to further his education by pursuing East Asian Studies. In 2019, he successfully earned a B.A. degree in East Asian Studies. Subsequently, he joined a public university in the western part of the United States to pursue his religious studies. It was during his second year as a graduate student when Dan became my research participant. During that period, he was planning to write his thesis with the aim of achieving a master's degree, specializing in Chinese religion. Another reason for choosing Dan as my research participant was because his major, Chinese religion, is not a Western discipline, which might have influenced his academic discourse socialization. I observed that he could communicate confidently in academic English with others in and outside of class. Through personal conversations, I knew that Dan's interests included Chinese history and classical literature, which motivated him to continue his studies in this field. He received a traditional Chinese education but had a different academic background from his classmates in his current department. He considered himself to be quiet and introverted, particularly on public occasions. The course instructor had received his Ph.D. degree in the United States and was a professor of Buddhist studies at the time of the research; he had published numerous academic papers and had supervised many doctoral students in the field of Chinese religion.

Research Relationship

Rapport with Dan was established prior to my data collection. I have a professional relationship of mutual respect with Dan, as we knew each other from WeChat (a popular online chatting application in China). Dan and I have a similar Chinese background, are the same gender, and share some common interests; for example, we are both Chinese-speaking international students, and we enjoy traditional Chinese culture and teaching Chinese as a foreign language. As a doctoral candidate and researcher, my understanding of his needs and ideas fosters a sense of friendship and creates opportunities for interactive and dialogic research. After obtaining permission to attend the instructor's class, I informed all the class members of my intention to audit the course (taking notes without engaging in interactions) for the purpose of studying Chinese Buddhism. During my research, I acted as a silent auditor, using the "pinning a screen" function to spotlight Dan as my primary participant. I closely observed his interactions with classmates and the instructor, as well as his gestures, facial expressions, homework presentations, and other relevant aspects. I also acted as a supportive person in his daily life, which allowed him to express his concerns and thoughts candidly to ensure that the semi-structured interviews progressed naturally. Upon completing this research project, all the class members were debriefed about its true purpose, which was to investigate Dan's learning behaviors and identity negotiation throughout the course.

Data Collection

I employed multiple methods for the data collection to permit data triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). Online observations with note taking and personal interviews are qualitative (ethnographic) research methods that have been widely used and have proven to be effective for generating data that are rich in detail and embedded in a naturalistic setting, particularly in case study and action research (Maxwell, 2012; Salmons, 2014). Cowie (2009) noted that, compared to audio or video classroom recordings, observations or field notes could motivate researchers to probe the emergent issues around them and provide first-hand insights into the external aspects of language learning and teaching.

My primary data collection method was interviews, which were all conducted in Chinese because this made it easier for me, as a native-Chinese speaker, to acquire first-hand information. I conducted and recorded two semi-structured interviews via Zoom (1.5 hours for

each) to collect the main data from Dan: One took place in the middle of the semester, while the other was conducted at the end of the semester (spring 2020). Three follow-up oral interviews with Dan, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, were conducted at the end of his master's program (spring 2021). Sample interview questions included general feelings about taking this online course, the challenges, and benefits of taking the course, and ways of interacting with the instructor and classmates in online learning. I was an active listener, and all the interviews were automatically recorded via Zoom Cloud. I also conducted one online interview with Dan's instructor and one with two of his classmates. The interview questions pertained to Dan's overall performance in the online course, the instructor's expectations regarding students' behaviors, and Dan's interactions with classmates and the instructor outside of the classroom. The data obtained from a third-person perspective, including the teacher's evaluation of Dan and Dan's classmates' thoughts about his performance in class, were intended to complement and enrich my previously collected data. My interviews with all the participants were transcribed using oTranscribe (<https://otranscribe.com/>), a free professional web application, for further data analysis.

Note taking (in paper form) was my secondary resource and was used to record academic discourses between the participant and the course instructor. Four zoom-mediated classroom observations were made in spring 2020, and another four were made in the fall. The length of each seminar course was 150 minutes. To minimize the observer's paradox (my presence in the class might have affected Dan's normal behavior), I switched my camera off and muted myself throughout the course and took notes to observe how and to what degree Dan's academic identity emerged in his performances in the online setting. In addition to interviews and observation notes, artifacts were gathered from the student's weekly assignments and the course syllabus for the online class. This provided objective evidence to decrease the possibility of researcher's bias in the thematic analysis.

Data Coding and Analysis

Following a tradition in qualitative research, my data analysis was mainly inductive (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Guided by the theory of language socialization and positioning, I identified and grouped significant categories and themes regarding the student's academic identity construction in virtual classroom interactions. I used the constant-comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) to obtain an overall view of my data. The process was conducted using NVivo 9 (QSR International Pty Ltd), which is a free software to conduct thematic analyses using an inductive approach. For example, some specific words and phrases were color coded in my interview data. These codes mainly covered learning efficiency, challenges, assignments, learners' backgrounds, unclear goals, unfamiliarity with others, misunderstanding the instructor, course design, and emotion words such as "isolated" and "embarrassed." I then marked relevant sentences for preliminary grouping and examined these sentences to formulate different types of meanings. The emergent meanings included Dan's unengaged attitude, the gap between the instructor's expectations and evaluations, lack of interactions with classmates, and his low motivation. Repeated and similar meanings in my dataset were finally categorized as one theme. In total, the themes related to my research questions included being a peripheral member in language socialization, the imposed identity between Dan and the instructor, identity and positioning influenced negatively by the course design, and Dan's unchanged and increased identity as an outsider. Theoretical saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2014) occurred when no new categories in the previous themes were identified following a thorough analysis. To ensure precision and objectivity, all my English-translated texts, categorized by themes, underwent thorough scrutiny and validation by a professional qualitative researcher proficient in both Chinese and English. Additionally, the

coded transcript was shared with the main participant (Dan) for a comprehensive member check. Any discrepancies between my English translations and the original Chinese audios were carefully noted, discussed, and double-confirmed to reach agreements by our team. Following Flick (2004), I used visual data (artifacts) for triangulation with the verbal data (oral interviews) as an independent source of information in my data analysis.

Findings

A Peripheral Member (Outsider) in Academic Discourse Socialization

The participants in the Buddhism course were six Ph.D. students and Dan, a master's student. Dan differed from his classmates in terms of his educational background; his undergraduate major in China was initially agriculture, but he selected Chinese religion for master's degree in the United States. I verified the information with Dan and the course instructor, who confirmed that all other classmates are Ph.D. students who had studied Chinese religion in China before coming to the United States and had a strong foundation in Buddhism studies prior to joining the doctoral program. Dan's dissimilar educational background made it difficult for him to participate and discuss basic concepts in class, leading to his distant relationship with his classmates in the discourse community. Dan noted:

The students in this class are basically the instructor's own doctoral students, and sometimes I felt that I did not know what they were talking about in class because the instructor and his Ph.D. students were familiar with each other's research interests. However, I was not familiar with them. (Interview, 03/28/20)

This comment shows that the classroom communication between Dan and his classmates was deficient and ineffective. Dan appeared to position himself as a peripheral member (outsider) in the virtual classroom, while the instructor and the other students had established a dialogic relationship in the academic socialization of their doctoral program. Other evidence of Dan positioning himself as an outsider is the following:

The Ph.D. students created a WeChat group outside of the classroom, and they probably got to know each other well. It's not easy for me to approach people with whom I am unfamiliar. The main reason is that people think differently; for example, one person knows this field, while another person knows another field. There is no way to communicate with them. (Interview, 03/28/20)

Dan thought that the doctoral students had formed a stable communication circle for group meetings and other activities on WeChat. While he recognized WeChat's effectiveness for communicating with them, he seemed unmotivated to get to know them better. He perceived the main hindrance to be their diverse backgrounds, which made it challenging for him to approach his classmates. During the second interview (04/27/20), Dan said "I never knew that the monthly meeting was still active online between the instructor and his Ph.D. students during the pandemic." He confessed to never attending the meetings where the instructor discussed academic progress and funding resources with students. Dan's indifference to these monthly advisor-student meetings showed he had already lost the opportunity to know and collaborate with other students, even before COVID-19. He mentioned his unwillingness to cooperate with his peers or to engage in group work:

I communicated with my partner in the assigned group work by sending emails or messages via WeChat, but I did not add my partner's WeChat before we worked together. I don't really like the option of working together on an assignment, and cooperation will not make things easier. (Interview, 04/27/20)

This reveals that Dan's lack of agency to know and work with others increased his self-positioning as an outsider in language socialization. He disregarded opportunities to become a legitimate community member and only cooperated when necessary. He doubted the effectiveness of collaboration, hindering his motivation to communicate with classmates and understand their thoughts and practices in discourse socialization.

Interactive Positioning Between the Student and the Instructor

Dan was slightly blamed for not putting in enough effort to achieve the goals set by the instructor, but he also complained about the instructor's lack of duty in helping with his academic progress when needed. Generally, Dan and the instructor attempted to impose their believed identities (duty) on each other; as these imposed identities were individually based, they could not match their individual positionings in real life. Dan stated:

I think this instructor is different from other teachers. He does not seem to have office hours, and I cannot reach out to him even if his office hours are moved online. However, I did email him when our class changed to the online mode and told him that I planned to write my master's thesis in his research field, so I wanted to know how to get started. He did not give me any practical or effective instruction in his reply, but simply said "continue to work hard," ha-ha (laughter). (Interview, 04/27/20)

This excerpt reveals Dan's negative evaluation of the instructor, whom he perceived to be different from other teachers at the university. Dan found it difficult to contact the instructor due to the absence of regular office hours. Furthermore, their email communication indicated Dan's dissatisfaction with the instructor's indifference to his academic struggles, evident from the instructor's brief and perfunctory responses. Dan appeared to position an ideal instructor who would be attentive and responsible when addressing students' issues. Meanwhile, the instructor described Dan's involvement in the course in a negative tone:

I think the stress on Dan's study is a little high; the quality of his assignment is not good, and his professional awareness of religious studies is not strong. Students in any discipline who have professional awareness can analyze issues correctly. Dan's problem is his non-religious background before coming to our department, as he seems unfamiliar with traditional Chinese religion. I can sense that he wants to pursue this field but, considering that he was required to rewrite his homework and his unsatisfactory performance in my class, I think he needs further improvement. (Interview, 05/04/20)

The instructor had specific expectations for the class, positioning a qualified student to have academic self-awareness in religious studies. However, Dan, considered a special case, did not meet these expectations. The instructor expressed dissatisfaction with Dan's performance due to unsatisfactory assignments and limited professional awareness. My observation notes indicate direct interactions between Dan and the instructor. For instance, in the note (04/01), the teacher asked Dan about his final project's timeline, but Dan's distracted

response led the teacher to ignore him and address other students. Another note (04/15) shows the teacher openly criticizing Dan's laziness in accessing historical material. Dan's simple response, "not yet found," without a sincere justification, implied his dissatisfaction with the teacher's expectations. Additionally, during a discussion about one of Dan's previous assignments, the teacher blamed him for providing a rough, single-page writing lacking essential details on the topic. The instructor believed it was Dan's attitude rather than his ability that caused his unsatisfactory performance in that class. Interactive positioning emerged and was developed from the online academic discourses between Dan and his instructor throughout the seminar.

Identity (Self-Positioning) Due to the Negative Influence of Course Design

The course design, including the general goals, assignment requirements, and different teaching modes, played an important role in the negative construction of Dan's academic identity and self-positioning throughout the online classes. Dan said:

No clear goal was established at the beginning of this course. The instructor introduced a topic, then moved on to another topic; these topics were not closely related. You have to do a search yourself and decide what you are going to do for your final project. Because my original major was not in this field, I felt confused and at a loss after completing this course. (Interview, 04/27/20)

The course had an issue with unclear goals as the topics discussed each week were not closely related. This is supported by the instructor's interview data, where he acknowledged that "each topic could be taken as a subdiscipline in the history of Chinese Buddhism" (05/04/20). As a graduate student without professional training in religious studies, Dan found the weekly topics too broad and disconnected. He attempted to position the instructor to be more responsible for designing these topics. Of note, Dan's classmates also expressed their dissatisfaction with the weekly topics. In the last interview (12/23/2021), they mentioned that the course was helpful for improving research abilities with Buddhist materials, but the vague weekly goals made them anxious about missing important aspects in their weekly reports. Evidently, the syllabus only stated the overall goal for students to conduct independent research using Chinese Buddhist materials. However, Dan, who identified himself as a layperson in the field, struggled to comprehend the syllabus, leading to his confusion about the weekly topics and assignment requirements.

Another issue was the disconnection of the final paper from the weekly assignments in this course as Dan indicated:

What I usually do in this course had nothing to do with the final paper. The weekly assignment was not associated with the theme of the final paper. Because the historical religious materials can be divided into several categories, it was difficult to establish a relationship among any of the categories. I feel the course design is disorganized and disoriented, so it was hard for me to keep anything under control from the beginning of this online course... (Interview, 04/27/20)

Dan had concerns about his final paper as the weekly assignments did not directly relate to its theme. The syllabus, nonetheless, underlined the importance of the final paper, accounting for 50% of students' final grades. This was evident during a class observation (04/08/20) when the instructor expected students to produce high-quality papers with resourceful evidence, polished

ideas, and concise expressions for potential publication. The instructor seemed to impose his positioning onto all students, believing they could meet these requirements based on the current course design. The current course design likely exacerbated Dan's tendency to develop a negative identity and position himself as an outsider with low motivation, as he struggled to cope with the course pressures.

Unchanged yet Increased Identity as an Outsider During Online Learning

Dan enrolled in most of his online courses between spring 2020 and spring 2021 after the outbreak of COVID-19. During one of our follow-up interviews in the fall of 2020, I inquired about his thoughts on the online Buddhism course, to which he responded:

The design of the course discouraged me from communicating deeply with peers in my department; we mainly discussed our own questions during this online course. I felt good if I finished all the assignments on time, as I never expected a high performance in all of the activities in this course.

I think language (English) is not a problem for me to take any online class, since I can mostly understand academic reading and listening in my field... (Interview, 09/25/2020)

The above extract indicates Dan's ongoing complaints concern the course design and online instruction method. He conveyed his feelings of disappointment and frustration using the terms "discouraged" and "never expected" in the context of online Buddhism learning. What sets Dan apart is that, as a Chinese international student, he didn't view his second language (English) as obstructive in the Buddhism course. Instead, he believed his academic English was proficient enough to meet the requirements of any course. Because of the course design, he continued his identity as an outsider and lost motivation to engage with the virtual community.

Another of Dan's complaints concerned his master's thesis and his studies of a major in religion in the online academic community:

I have no idea who else I should contact for my M.A. thesis; some faculty members do not believe I can finish this thesis on time and want to persuade me to change my current topic, religious anthropology. As this is my only topic of interest, they should get me through. Overall, I am not satisfied studying here, I am still confused about basic concepts in Chinese religion after taking this class. I don't know the format for a thesis either, despite spending a lot of time trying to understand them. (Interview, 03/24/2021)

Dan voiced anxiety and dissatisfaction with the program's professional training, including academic writing guidance and explanations of basic constructs in Chinese religion. His negatively constructed identity remained unchanged throughout the online course, even up to the final thesis stage. His sense of isolation extended to the local community. Dan said:

I became increasingly reluctant to interact with others after taking online courses, as I think it is useless to do this, ha-ha (laughter)! I would prefer to contact my family on a regular basis. By contrast, the local community does not leave a good impression on me, including my department and online courses. (Interview, 12/11/2020)

It appears that Dan's tendency to self-identify as an outsider had increased, since he used the terms "reluctant" and "useless" to indicate a strong agency to disconnect himself from non-family individuals during the pandemic. Because of his unfavorable perceptions of the local community, Dan confined his social circle to his family members, showing hesitance in connecting with his classmates and teachers.

Dan's classmates confirmed his learning behaviors in terms of identity construction. As two of his classmates stated:

Dan seldom interacted with us when we took the online Buddhism course. He never appeared to ask or answer questions unless the teacher asked him to. We felt that his English was good, but he was less confident and talkative in class. We also know he is at the thesis writing stage from our recent short conversation on WeChat... (Interview, 12/23/2021)

The words "seldom" and "never" indicate that there were almost no interactions between Dan and his classmates in the online course throughout the academic year. The two classmates acknowledged that Dan's English was good but highlighted his introverted personality as a factor that might have influenced him to construct an identity of being less involved in the virtual academic community. This echoes Dan's demotivation and a sense of isolation in his online discourse socialization, which formed a barrier to his satisfactory academic progress.

Discussion

Based on Dan's online learning experiences, I discussed the rationale for his self-positioning as an outsider, the interactive positioning between Dan and the instructor, and the negative impact of the course design on his academic identity. Three arguments can be elaborated.

First, I argue that academic identity, instead of language proficiency, can be key to L2 learners' socialization in virtual communities in certain contexts. A multitude of previous studies (e.g., Burhan-Horasanlı, 2022; De Costa et al., 2022; Halic et al., 2009; Okuda & Anderson, 2018; Seloni, 2012) have illustrated that the English competence of L2 learners is prone to stimulate their self-positioning as engaged language users, hence enriching academic progress and social relationships. However, the findings of the present study contradict previous studies due to the special learning context: (1) The learner being observed in the Buddhism course was the only master's student and had a different educational background from the doctoral students; (2) the subject of Buddhism, as a non-Western topic, allowed the instructor and students to have bilingual interactions using both Chinese and English; (3) all the classroom participants (Chinese L1 English L2) share the same cultural background, which could potentially facilitate their academic understanding. As mentioned previously, Dan's academic English was sufficiently proficient to meet the requirements of this course. Therefore, the bilingual classroom did not hinder Dan's performance in the online course, the problem was his constructed identity (positioning) of an outsider, which demotivated him and prevented him from making progress in his studies. Dan's learning experience shows that a negatively constructed identity in the specific context of a bilingual online classroom can pose psychological barriers (e.g., negative mindset and pessimistic outlook) to international graduate students' successful socialization in academic communities.

Second, I argue that the tendency toward a bidirectionally imposed identity between students and instructors can be sustained and reinforced in a virtual educational community. As noted previously, the instructor indicated "professional awareness" as a necessary ability to impose his positioning on Dan. However, Dan rejected the teacher's positioning and imposed

his positioning on the teacher due to his belief that the instructor's duty was to make his office hours clear and to be responsible for students' affairs, particularly regarding courses and individual academic progress. Thus, Dan and the instructor mutually projected imposed identities, with each expecting the other to make changes related to their duties and responsibilities throughout the course. This finding is consistent with Harré and van Langenhove's (1999) claim that interlocutors can assign positions pertaining to rights and duties in the social community to each other in discourse socialization. This also confirms Duff's (2007) bidirectional model of language socialization, in that there is a bidirectional trend in interactive positioning, and identity can be mutually imposed upon interlocutors in discourse socialization. It has been argued that building a mutual trust network and a dialogic relationship between students and teachers in the context of distance education would be beneficial for learners' academic development during the pandemic (Desai & Nguyen, 2021). However, the extended segregation from the local community and remote learning often makes students less likely to maintain effective dialogues with instructors and classmates in higher education (Tsang et al., 2021). Accordingly, graduate students' sense of isolation and distrust may be intensified by their decreased investment in online classrooms as communities of practice. The bidirectionally imposed (interactive) identity in this study had a strongly negative impact on the student-teacher relationship, resulting in Dan's difficulty to fully participate in his academic discourse socialization.

Third, I argue that academic identity might not be easily altered but can be affected by the course design in digitally mediated language socialization. The Buddhism course in this study changed from in-person to online due to COVID-19, but Dan's learning behaviors before and during the pandemic did not change. His academic identity was constructed and embodied in his struggle and feelings of disappointment in this course and remained stable despite the teaching environment transitioning online. Wheeler et al. (2005) demonstrated the involvement of students in online problem-based learning within their community of practice had a positive impact on their professional practice styles, whereas they found little evidence on which to base a connection between online identity and professional practice in the "real world." Nonetheless, one of my findings contradicts their conclusion, revealing that the shift from in-person instruction to distance learning resulted in the formation of Dan's academic identity, as he exhibited continuous dissatisfaction and reduced engagement in both online courses and offline community interactions. He maintained his negatively constructed identity because of the disorganized course design, including the overwhelming emphasis on the grade of the final class project. However, effective learning objectives in a syllabus are not simply intended for the final research project; as Slattery and Carlson (2005) argued, the objectives should include a range of teaching goals with an emphasis on various types of knowledge, such as historical context, terminology, theory, and methodology, as well as building critical thinking skills. Additionally, the absence of clear learning objectives due to unrelated topics left Dan with a sense of uncertainty and confusion in Buddhism learning. The importance of course design has been proven to be a key predictive factor in effective distance learning (e.g., Grant & Thornton, 2007; Tsang et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2020). There is reason to believe that Dan's lack of motivation and agency to involve himself in the community might have been due to the adverse effects of the online course design.

In summary, Dan's negatively constructed identity was affected by external (educational background, virtual community, and course design) and internal factors (personality and motivation), resulting in a stable, yet conservative, social network in his virtual academic socialization. This finding supports previous discussions (e.g., Cheng, 2000; Holmes, 2005; Zhao, 1995) regarding Chinese students' learning performances, as students from a Confucius-heritage culture tend to behave in reticent and passive ways in both virtual and in-person classrooms, which affects their agency and motivation in terms of participation in the

community of practice. Unlike previous studies of international Chinese students (e.g., Ku & Lohr, 2003; Sadykova & Meskill, 2019; Thompson & Ku, 2005; Yim, 2011; Zhao & McDougall, 2008), this study provided both the classmates' and the instructor's perspectives, together with classroom observations and artifacts, to triangulate the findings regarding Dan's academic socialization in the digitally mediated classroom. This allowed for an in-depth understanding of the dynamic nature of identity negotiation and the multimodal practices of academic discourse socialization in a virtual bilingual classroom. Furthermore, the study identified a theoretical connection among three sociocultural models by examining a Chinese learner's identity construction in his academic discourse socialization, thus suggesting that the process of constructing academic identity is associated with self- and others' positionings in educational contexts in which language socialization mirrors how a learner's sense of professionalism and achievement are negotiated over time and space.

Conclusion and Implications

In summary, this longitudinal case study revealed how a Chinese graduate student's academic identity was constructed via negotiating his participation in online bilingual contexts at a U.S. university. By incorporating three theoretical models, namely L2 socialization (Duff, 2010a), identity formation within historical and institutional contexts (Hall, 1996), and positioning theory (Davies & Harré, 1990), I argue that: (1) instead of competence in English, a constructed academic identity, whether positive or negative, is sometimes key to understanding learners' successful L2 socialization; (2) the tendency toward bidirectionally imposed identities between students and instructors can emerge and evolve in a virtual educational community; and (3) a learner's academic identity might not be easily changed, yet it remains susceptible to negative construction stemming from underdeveloped course design, especially in online classrooms.

The findings of this study have dual implications for international students' academic success in the U.S. higher education. One suggestion is to promote a problem-solving mindset and positive mentality among students when they encounter emotional challenges. In addition to seeking assistance from supervisors, international graduate students should proactively participate in seminars or workshops (Jazvac-Martek, 2009) that are facilitated by experienced faculty or peers. Through these platforms, students are encouraged to openly communicate their learning challenges and expectations, thus gaining diverse insights and recommendations from their peers. The affective issues discussed in this study underline the importance of instructors embracing a learner-centered instructional approach (Halic et al., 2009). This approach involves fostering inclusive and cooperative relationships, such as through project-based group presentations and game-based reading and writing activities. Furthermore, the use of self-assessment and the creation of a dialogic relationship after class might aid instructors in comprehending and addressing issues related to race, culture, and gender (e.g., Gomes et al., 2014; González, 2006; Morita, 2004; Wette & Furneaux, 2018) that arise from a diverse student body in academic socialization. Another suggestion is to consider graduate students' voices to establish a well-structured course design. To achieve this, college educators should prioritize students' viewpoints, particularly in the context of smaller class sizes, when designing graduate-level courses. Bovill et al. (2011) emphasized the educational significance of the "student voice," proposing that involving students in course design could empower them as co-creators, leading to substantial improvements in engagement, motivation, and enthusiasm. Despite instructors' expertise and students' voices in shaping syllabus design, working with colleagues and other peers from local curriculum development programs, can bolster content quality and learning goals.

While this research is constrained by its singular case study nature, which may limit its generalizability to other theories and populations, the insights and discussions drawn from the Chinese graduate student's online learning encounters in the field of religious studies can still contribute by offering fresh insights into the same topic areas (language socialization and academic identity) within a particular context (Duff, 2014). It might be more informative, for example, to observe the same student's learning behaviors in various religion courses taught by different instructors. Moreover, a comparison between male and female Chinese students taking online bilingual courses would be essential to identify gender-related factors in the construction of academic identity through L1 and L2 socialization. The goal of including multiple cases and dynamic contexts in future studies is to produce more general, higher-order, and abstract insights for identity studies on international Chinese graduate students as a special social group.

References

- Ai, B. (2017). Constructing an academic identity in Australia: An autoethnographic narrative. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(6), 1095-1107. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1303459>
- Baber, H. (2022). Social interaction and effectiveness of the online learning: A moderating role of maintaining social distance during the pandemic COVID-19. *Asian Education and Development Studies*, 11(1), 159-171. <https://doi.org/10.1108/AEDS-09-2020-0209>
- Bao, D., & Pham, T. (Eds.). (2021). *Transforming pedagogies through engagement with learners, teachers and communities* (Vol. 57). Springer Nature.
- Beckett, G. H., Amaro-Jiménez, C., & Beckett, K. S. (2010). Students' use of asynchronous discussions for academic discourse socialization. *Distance Education*, 31(3), 315-335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01587919.2010.513956>
- Billot, J. (2010). The imagined and the real: Identifying the tensions for academic identity. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 29(6), 709-721. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2010.487201>
- Blackmore, P. (2007). Disciplinary difference in academic leadership and management and its development: A significant factor? *Research in Post-compulsory Education*, 12(2), 225-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13596740701387502>
- Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Data analysis and interpretation of qualitative research for education* (4th ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Bovill, C., Cook-Sather, A., & Felten, P. (2011). Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: Implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16(2), 133-145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1360144X.2011.568690>
- Burhan-Horasanlı, E. (2022). Digital social reading: Exploring multilingual graduate students' academic discourse socialization in online platforms. *Linguistics and Education*, 71, 101099. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2022.101099>
- Cheng, X. (2000). Asian students' reticence revisited. *System*, 28(3), 435-446. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X\(00\)00015-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(00)00015-4)
- Clarke, L. W. (2006). Power through voicing others: Girls' positioning of boys in literature circle discussions. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 38(1), 53-79. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15548430jlr3801_3
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage.
- Cowie, N. (2009). Observation. In J. Heigham & R. A. Croker (Eds.), *Qualitative research in applied linguistics: A practical introduction* (pp. 165-181). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Daniel, J. (2012). Choosing between non-probability sampling and probability sampling. In J. Daniel (Ed.), *Sampling essentials: Practical guidelines for making sampling choices* (pp. 66-80). Sage.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20(1), 43-63.
- De Costa, P. I., Li, W., & Lee, J. (Eds.). (2022). *International students' multilingual literacy practices: An asset-based approach to understanding academic discourse socialization* (Vol. 109). Channel View Publications.
- Desai, A., & Nguyen, H. N. (Eds.). (2021). *Global perspectives on dialogue in the classroom: Cultivating inclusive, intersectional, and authentic conversations*. Springer International Publishing.
- Duff, P. A. (2007). Second language socialization as sociocultural theory: Insights and issues. *Language Teaching*, 40(4), 309-319. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004508>
- Duff, P. A. (2010a). Language socialization. In N. H. Hornberger & S. L. McKay (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics and language education* (pp. 427-452). Multilingual Matters.
- Duff, P. A. (2010b). Language socialization into academic discourse communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 169-192. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000048>
- Duff, P. A. (2012). Issues of identity. In A. Mackey & S. M. Gass (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 410-426). Routledge.
- Duff, P. A. (2014). Case study research on language learning and use. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 34, 233-255. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000051>
- Duff, P., & Doherty, L. (2015). Examining agency in (second) language socialization research. In P. Deters, X. Gao, E. Miller, & G. Vitanova (Eds.), *Interdisciplinary approaches to theorizing and analyzing agency and second language learning* (pp. 54-72). Multilingual Matters.
- Ellinger, A. D., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2005). Case study research methods. In R. A. Swanson & E. F. Holton III (Eds.), *Research in organizations: Foundations and methods of inquiry* (pp. 327-350). Berrett-Koehler.
- Flick, U. (2004). Triangulation in qualitative research. In U. Flick, E. von Kardorff, & I. Steinke (Eds.), *A companion to qualitative research* (pp. 178-183). Sage.
- Fogle, L. W. (2012). *Second language socialization and learner agency*. Multilingual Matters.
- Foot, R., Crowe, A. R., Tollafield, K. A., & Allan, C. E. (2014). Exploring doctoral student identity development using a self-study approach. *Teaching and Learning Inquiry*, 2(1), 103-118. <https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearning.2.1.103>
- Friedman, D. A. (2010). Becoming national: Classroom language socialization and political identities in the age of globalization. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 30, 193-210. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190510000061>
- Frick, B. L., & Brodin, E. M. (2020). A return to Wonderland: Exploring the links between academic identity development and creativity during doctoral education. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 57(2), 209-219. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/14703297.2019.1617183>
- Gao, G., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1998). *Communicating effectively with the Chinese*. Sage.
- Giampapa, F. (2011). The politics of "being and becoming" a researcher: Identity, power, and negotiating the field. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 10(3), 132-144. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2011.585304>
- Gomes, C., Berry, M., Alzougool, B., & Chang, S. (2014). Home away from home: International students and their identity-based social networks in Australia. *Journal of International Students*, 4(1), 2-15. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v4i1.493>

- González, J. C. (2006). Academic socialization experiences of Latina doctoral students: A qualitative understanding of support systems that aid and challenges that hinder the process. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*, 5(4), 347-365. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1538192706291141>
- Grant, M. R., & Thornton, H. R. (2007). Best practices in undergraduate adult-centered online learning: Mechanisms for course design and delivery. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching*, 3(4), 346-356.
- Halic, O., Greenberg, K., & Paulus, T. (2009). Language and academic identity: A study of the experiences of non-native English speaking international students. *International Education*, 38(2), 5. <https://trace.tennessee.edu/internationaleducation/vol38/iss2/5>
- Hall, S. (1996). Introduction: Who needs identity? In S. Hall & P. Du Gay (Eds.), *Questions of cultural identity* (pp. 1-17). Sage.
- Harré, R. (2012). Positioning theory: Moral dimensions of social-cultural psychology. In J. Valsiner (Ed.), *Oxford library of psychology. The Oxford handbook of culture and psychology* (pp. 191-206). Oxford University Press.
- Harré, R., Moghaddam, F. M., Cairnie, T. P., Rothbart, D., & Sabat, S. R. (2009). Recent advances in positioning theory. *Theory & Psychology*, 19(1), 5-31. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0959354308101417>
- Harré, R., & van Langenhove, L. (1999). The dynamics of social episodes. *Positioning theory: Moral contexts of social action* (pp. 1-13). Blackwell.
- Heller, M. (1987). The role of language in the formation of ethnic identity. In J. Phinney & M. Rotheram (Eds.), *Children's ethnic socialization* (pp. 180-200). Sage.
- Heidari, E., Salimi, G., & Mehrvarz, M. (2023). The influence of online social networks and online social capital on constructing a new graduate students' professional identity. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 31(1), 214-231. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2020.1769682>
- Hoang, C. H., & Pretorius, L. (2019). Identity and agency as academics: Navigating academia as a doctoral student. In L. Pretorius, L. Macaulay, & B. Cahusac de Caux (Eds.), *Wellbeing in doctoral education: Insights and guidance from the student experience* (pp. 143-151). Springer. DOI: 10.1007/978-981-13-9302-0_12
- Holmes, P. (2004). Negotiating differences in learning and intercultural communication: Ethnic Chinese students in a New Zealand university. *Business Communication Quarterly*, 67(3), 294-307. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1080569904268141>
- Holmes, P. (2005). Ethnic Chinese students' communication with cultural others in a New Zealand university. *Communication Education*, 54(4), 289-311. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03634520500442160>
- Jazvac-Martek, M. (2009). Oscillating role identities: The academic experiences of education doctoral students. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 46(3), 253-264. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14703290903068862>
- Jensen, D. H., & Jetten, J. (2016). The importance of developing students' academic and professional identities in higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 57(8), 1027-1042. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0097>
- Kayi-Aydar, H. (2018). *Positioning theory in applied linguistics: Research design and applications*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kayi-Aydar, H., & Miller, E. R. (2018). Positioning in classroom discourse studies: A state-of-the-art review. *Classroom Discourse*, 9(2), 79-94. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2018.1450275>
- Ku, H. Y., & Lohr, L. L. (2003). A case study of Chinese student's attitudes toward their first online learning experience. *Educational Technology Research and Development*, 51(3), 95-102. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02504557>

- Kulick, D., & Schieffelin, B. (2004). Language socialization. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *A companion to linguistic anthropology* (pp. 349-368). Blackwell.
- Lam, W. S. E. (2004). Second language socialization in a bilingual chat room: Global and local considerations. *Language Learning & Technology*, 8(3), 44-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.125/43994>
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Li, J. (2016). Rediscover lasting values: Confucian cultural learning models in the twenty-first century. In G. Zhao & Z. Deng (Eds.), *Re-envisioning Chinese education: The meaning of person-making in a new age* (pp. 130-147). Routledge.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (2014). *Designing qualitative research* (6th ed.). Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (Vol. 41). Sage.
- Miller, R. A. (2017). "My voice is definitely strongest in online communities": Students using social media for queer and disability identity-making. *Journal of College Student Development*, 58(4), 509-525. <https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2017.0040>
- Moore, R. (2004). *Education and society: Issues and explanations in the sociology of education*. Polity Press.
- Morita, N. (2004). Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(4), 573-603. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3588281>
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. Longman.
- Okuda, T., & Anderson, T. (2018). Second language graduate students' experiences at the writing center: A language socialization perspective. *TESOL Quarterly*, 52(2), 391-413. <https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.406>
- Pretorius, L., & Macaulay, L. (2021). Notions of human capital and academic identity in the Ph.D.: Narratives of the disempowered. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 92(4), 623-647. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2020.1854605>
- Rex, L., & Schiller, L. (2009). *Using discourse analysis to improve classroom interaction*. Routledge.
- Sachs, J. (2001). Teacher professional identity: Competing discourses, competing outcomes. *Journal of Education Policy*, 16(2), 149-161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02680930116819>
- Sadykova, G., & Meskill, C. (2019). Interculturality in online learning: Instructor and student accommodations. *Online Learning*, 23(1), 5-21. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24059/olj.v23i1.1418>
- Salmons, J. (2014). *Qualitative online interviews: Strategies, design, and skills*. Sage.
- Schieffelin, B. B., & Ochs, E. (1986). Language socialization. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 15(1), 163-191.
- Seloni, L. (2012). Academic literacy socialization of first year doctoral students in US: A micro-ethnographic perspective. *English for Specific Purposes*, 31(1), 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2011.05.004>
- Slattery, J. M., & Carlson, J. F. (2005). Preparing an effective syllabus: Current best practices. *College Teaching*, 53(4), 159-164. <https://doi.org/10.3200/CTCH.53.4.159-164>
- Slocum, N., & Langenhove, L. V. (2004). The meaning of regional integration: Introducing positioning theory in regional integration studies. *Journal of European Integration*, 26(3), 227-252. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0703633042000261625>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Thompson, L., & Ku, H. Y. (2005). Chinese graduate students' experiences and attitudes toward online learning. *Educational Media International*, 42(1), 33-47.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523980500116878>
- Thorne, S. L., Black, R. W., & Sykes, J. M. (2009). Second language use, socialization, and learning in internet interest communities and online gaming. *The Modern Language Journal*, 93, 802-821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2009.00974.x>
- Thorne, S. L., Sauro, S., & Smith, B. (2015). Technologies, identities, and expressive activity. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 215-233. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000257>
- Tsang, J. T., So, M. K., Chong, A. C., Lam, B. S., & Chu, A. M. (2021). Higher education during the pandemic: The predictive factors of learning effectiveness in COVID-19 online learning. *Education Sciences*, 11(8), 446. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci11080446>
- Wan, G. (1999). The learning experience of Chinese students in American universities: A cross-cultural perspective. *ERIC Clearing House*, 1-25. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED439653>
- Wang, Y., Harding, R., & Mai, L. W. (2012). Impact of cultural exposure on young Chinese students' adaptation in a UK business school. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(5), 621-639. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2010.536528>
- Watson-Gegeo, K. A. (2004). Mind, language, and epistemology: Toward a language socialization paradigm for SLA. *The Modern Language Journal*, 88(3), 331-350. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0026-7902.2004.00233.x>
- Wette, R., & Furneaux, C. (2018). The academic discourse socialisation challenges and coping strategies of international graduate students entering English-medium universities. *System*, 78, 186-200. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.09.001>
- Wheeler, S., Kelly, P., & Gale, K. (2005). The influence of online problem-based learning on teachers' professional practice and identity. *Research in Learning Technology*, 13(2), 125-137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687760500104088>
- Wu, R. (2017). Academic socialization of Chinese doctoral students in Germany: identification, interaction and motivation. *European Journal of Higher Education*, 7(3), 276-290. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2017.1290880>
- Yim, Y. K. K. (2011). Second language students' discourse socialization in academic online communities. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 67(1), 1-27. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cmlr.67.1.001>
- Zhao, A. D. (1995). *The pedagogical issues and coping strategies of Chinese adult students at the University of Auckland* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Auckland, New Zealand].
- Zhao, N., & McDougall, D. (2008). Cultural influences on Chinese students' asynchronous online learning in a Canadian university. *International Journal of E-Learning & Distance Education*, 22(2), 59-80.
- Zhang, Y. L. (2013). Power distance in online learning: Experience of Chinese learners in US higher education. *International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 14(4), 238-254. <https://doi.org/10.19173/irrodl.v14i4.1557>
- Zheng, B., Lin, C. H., & Kwon, J. B. (2020). The impact of learner-, instructor-, and course-level factors on online learning. *Computers & Education*, 150, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2020.103851>

Author Note

Xiaolong Lu obtained his Ph.D. degree from University of Arizona. His research focuses on language socialization, second language acquisition, Chinese Linguistics, and L2 teaching. Please direct correspondence to charmander@arizona.edu.

Copyright 2024: Xiaolong Lu and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Lu, X. (2024). Associating academic identity with language socialization in virtual community: A case study of a Chinese graduate student's learning experiences in religion studies. *The Qualitative Report*, 29(1), 141-161. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2024.5649>
