Relationship Between Language of Origin Effect and Language Learning Motivation

Taiwan's entry to the WTO increases opportunities for global interaction in aspects of culture, economy, business, education, etc. Recognition of the importance of learning international languages, Taiwan schools have recently expanded English education to elementary school grades. More often than not, the emphasis on language education is within the social realm, i.e., interaction in natural ways. However, the majority of language contact people in Taiwan have is through marketing messages within the commercial aspects of the target culture, such as television, film, radio, Internet, etc. This acquaints young people with the marketing efforts of overseas firms, such as American, Japanese, or Korean based companies. Will these social and cultural contacts affect students' motivation in studying foreign languages? Little research to date has investigated the potential positive influence such exposure can have.

Through brand theory we can gain an insight into how students increase their consumer socialization in target language. This research is divided into two stages. In the first stage, it is hypothesized that through these commercial interactions consumer socialization is taking place that can expand understanding of the target culture's values and in turn improve language learning motivation and performance. This research attempts to quantify the positive effect such commercial exposure has on learning motivation.

In the second stage, through a series of pre-tests, the construct of LOO (Language of Origin) effect will be operationalized. Structural equation modeling (LISREL) will be used to build a model of the role of consumer socialization in language skill development and its accompanying acculturation. Results will underscore influential factors in motivating students through commercial exposures to the target culture. These results will next be used in laboratory settings to test for increased motivation and finally in a classroom setting for confirmatory testing.

## Introduction

Socialization is the way people learn to act *correctly* within the context of a culture (Baumrind, 1980). Culture itself is a kind of software of the mind through which all experiences of the world and interactions with people are filtered and interpreted (Hofstede, 1997). Previous research has shown that both socialization and cultural learning take place at an early age (enculturation). For learners of a foreign language in Taiwan, exposure to the second language (L2) culture is often limited to commercial aspects of the target culture. Indeed, in the highly interconnected commercial world of the 21st century students of an L2 are often flooded with artifacts, symbols, heroes, and the rituals of the L2 culture. Importantly, however, is that these artifacts are for the most part commercial in nature, thus exposing L2 learners to the target culture's marketing efforts rather than a balanced and accurate view of the culture in its totality.

While such commercial influence is often criticized for its imbalance, this research attempts to quantify the effects such commercial exposure has, through consumer behavior, on influencing consumers' decisions to learn more about the cultures where the marketing message emanates from. Moreover, this project asserts that through brand theory and marketing communication theory we can gain an insight into how consumers attempt to increase their relationships, and thus exposure, to communications from the target language. It is hypothesized that through these commercial interactions, consumer socialization is taking place that parallels that of children in the target culture itself, where the young are trained to act *appropriately* as maturing consumers. Such socialization can be capitalized on by marketers in so far as consumers in foreign markets may show high similarity to domestic consumers, which can be predicted as a correlate of language learning.

Through a series of pre-tests, the construct of LOO (Language of Origin) will be operationalized. LOO is hypothesized to represent a favorable view of products (products here include information-based products including movies, television programs, books, etc.) based solely on the language used and the assumed association with the target language's culture. This construct will then be used in a wide area survey on both language and non-language majors including data collection on the role of ethnocentrism, consumer socialization, second/foreign language ability, and selection of major. SEM (Structural Equation Modeling) LISREL will be used to build a model of the role of consumer socialization in language skill development and its accompanying acculturation.

## Research Motivation

It is not uncommon for language teachers in Taiwan to use foreign films or television programs in language class. Popular music is also often used, both in an attempt to lower students' level of apprehension while increasing input of cultural information. The same is true with U.S. students studying Japanese in the U.S., where popular Japanese films and/or television programs are viewed. Increasing interest in the target language's culture not only improves the contextual use of the language, but also

increases interest in the language for students who become curious to learn more about the culture that surrounds the language.  Figure 1 shows the layers of culture resemble and onion, which can only be peeled away one layer at a time.  At the center is the core of any culture—its values, which cannot be viewed directly.  Through screening movies, using symbols, discussing heroes and re-enacting rituals of the target culture we hope to be able to capture some of the underlying values of the culture in the classroom.  Often overlooked, however, is that these artifacts, such as television programs, are themselves products produced to satisfy a demand in the original market while also reinforcing consumer behavior norms there.

Figure 1. Levels of culture (adapted from Hofstede, 1997)

**Artifacts**
**Symbols**
**Heroes**
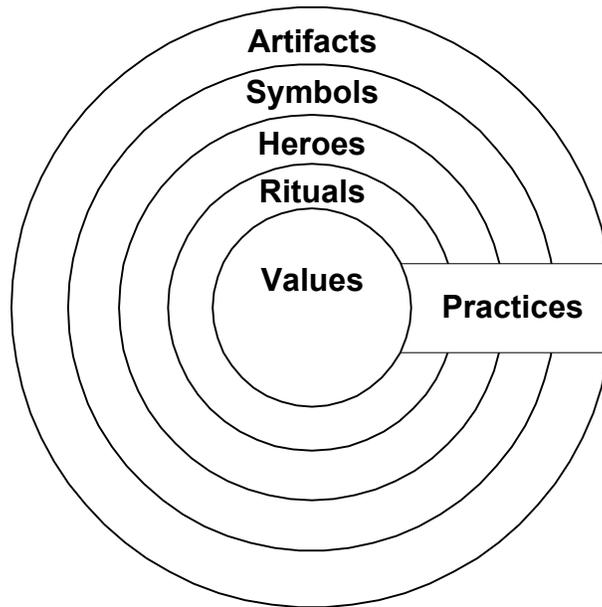**Rituals**
**Values**
**Practices**

Figure 2 shows the cultural onion as a spectrum along four different axes: commercial, ethnocentrism, sharable, and entry.  The outside layers of the onion are all more easily accessed by people outside of the culture, while the inside layers are accessed only with increasing difficulty.  Outermost layers are more commercial in nature, easily shared, require only somewhat reduced levels ethnocentrism and, most important to this research proposal, can act as a point of entry to the deeper levels of the cultural onion.  Language plays a central role as the layers of the cultural onion are penetrated.  At the outermost layers, the target culture's language can be used in translated form completely, but at deeper levels, it becomes difficult to master skills without an accompanying mastery of the target language.

Figure 2. Characteristics of learning a culture & language

**More Commercial**

**Medium Ethnocentrism**

**Easily Shared**

**Point of Entry**

Language Complexity

Non-Commercial

Low Ethnocentrism

Not Easily Shared

Delayed Entry
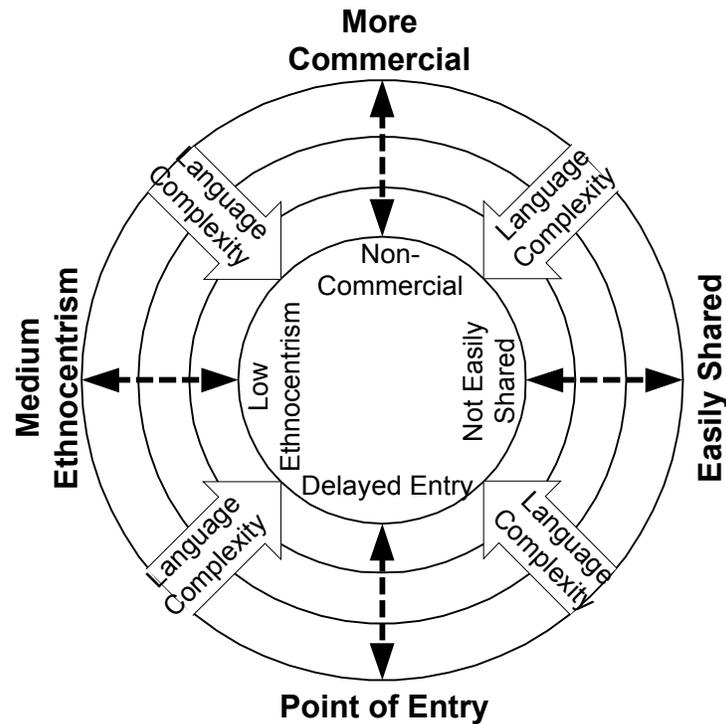
Language Complexity

        Table 1 shows an example of the characteristics of the cultural onion for an American deciding to view the Chinese film *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon*.  This is a good example of a cultural product purposely placed at the outermost layers of the cultural onion simply in order to increase opportunity for profit.  The film, by Taiwan director Ang Lee, was produced with American funding, filmed in China, and stared Asian movie stars familiar to Western audiences.  Americans deciding to view this film my use it as an entry point to further understanding of the Chinese culture (although that may not be a cognitive priority).  Students in basic Chinese classes in high school and university will watch the film with somewhat better understanding but the film lacks very deep cultural meaning, thus it will do little for advanced students of Chinese language, history, or literature.  Thus this cultural artifact can act as an excellent entry point for further understanding of Chinese culture, and language.  In Table 1 the only negative aspect that the subtitles may cause people with high levels of ethnocentrism to avoid the film (and in fact this is the biggest criticism of the film from critics).

Table 1. Example of American entering the Chinese cultural onion

| Activity | Commercial | Ethnocentrism | Shareable | Entry | Language |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| See movie *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* | Advertised in the popular press | High ethnocentric people difficult to view a subtitled film | Well produced beautiful to watch | No previous knowledge required | Subtitled translation |
| | Easy to find (low cost) | Medium ethnocentric people difficult to accept subtitled film | Easy to understand action/love story | Film produced with Western audience in mind | Simple dialogue |
| | People talking about it in social conversations (reference groups) | High ethnocentric people not open to purchasing a foreign product | Marshal arts widely enjoyed | | Emphasis on visual story telling |
| | Pay money to view (simple economic exchange) | | Well known film stars | | |

An equivalent example of exported American culture at the outside layers of the onion would be the film *Titanic*. While accessible to many in Taiwan, people with high levels of ethnocentrism may still find the film *too foreign*. Others, however, will use the film as a starting point for understanding more about Western culture and the English language. Indeed, at the time of the film's success many English language radio programs, television shows, magazines and certainly numerous classrooms, were abuzz discussing the film. It is this link, apparent to commercial organizations as well as teachers in the classroom that has yet to be explored as an important factor in language learning.

## Connecting Language & Consumer Socialization

The link between language learning and commercial activity Language learning researchers have pointed out the need to include theories of motivation that influence learning, from a number of social science domains (Dornyei, 1994; Noels et al., 2000; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Voght, 2000; Warden & Lin, 2000). Oxford and Shearin (1994) have observed that few L2 teachers are at all aware of their students' reasons for studying a foreign language. Voght (2000) strongly emphasizes that universities must combine their language programs with business goals, since the commercial aspect of the language can be the strongest motivating force when studying the language from afar. Universities that have shifted to more interdependent language programs have shown great success (Grosse and Voght, 1990 and 1991; Voght and Schaub, 1992; Voght and Grosse, 1998). These schools have merged language teaching programs with international business programs, as it seems students often are motivated to learn language when it is linked to commercial aspects, or outer layers of the cultural onion (Grosse et al., 1998).

## Ethnocentrism

### *Language Learning*

Ethnocentrism in high levels has been found to make people less open to language learning, or at least less successful at it (Gardner & Lambert, 1959; 1972). Social pressures may influence how students view their peers who are studying a foreign

language (Gatbonton, 1996; Segalowitz & Gatbonton, 1977) as the study of the language can take on *anti-native* intonations. At its basic form, ethnocentrism in language learning can be defined as a view of *we* (the users of our native language) and *they* (the users of the foreign language) with a negative value attached to the *they* group (Kalin & Berry, 1994). Tremblay and Gardner (1995) included a construct labeled *attitudes toward French Canadians* in their motivation model of students studying French as an L2. Wiseman et al. (1989) found that students with higher levels of ethnocentrism exhibited lower levels of interest in the foreign group's culture, and for world culture in general. Strong cases have been made to link high levels of ethnocentrism with low levels of English ability in Japanese students of English (Hayes, 1979; Miller, 1982; Reischauer, 1981). Koike and Tanaka (1995) identified specific factors in education that contribute to reinforcing a view of Japanese as a group and outsiders outside the group, while Kubota (1999) observed that linguistic researchers tend to label Japan as traditional and the West as modern, again reinforcing ethnocentric views which may not have justifiable links to reality, but simply serve to separate the *We* from the *they*.

## Consumer Behavior

Hinenoya and Gatbonton (2000) in a recent study could not find strong support for increased language skill when FL students exhibited lower scores on variables such as general ethnocentrism. These scales, adapted from Wiseman et al. (1989), reflected self ratings of dislike for foreign people and cultures including such questions as: *I suppose foreigners are all right*. Such an approach runs the risk of questions in validity, as it is generally not acceptable to express such views, thus respondents may couch their responses. In addition, it is the assertion of this study that the benefit of low ethnocentricity lies in the student's openness to exposure to entry points in the culture onion, which can lead to better language ability. The opposite, however, may not be true, i.e., low ethnocentricity does not block students ability to achieve skill in a FL. This approach is similar to previous research of the effect of ethnocentricity in consumer behavior.

It is not the case that a product produced overseas automatically causes a consumer to refuse purchase (and cognitive involvement). Rather, the marketing of a product can be enhanced by including in its feature set the nationalistic slogan *Made Domestically*. Such an approach attracts consumers with higher levels of ethnocentricity and has little effect on those with low ethnocentricity. The effect of ethnocentrism has a long history in the social science of consumer behavior within the context of the science of marketing. Shimp and Sharma (1987) developed the most widely used scale in measuring consumer ethnocentrism, the CETSCALE. This research project asserts that rather than a general ethnocentrism, it is a more specific consumer ethnocentrism that when low more easily allows a language learner to become a consumer of the foreign produced products, but when high prevents such product involvement that constitutes a socialization on being a consumer of the foreign products.

## Country of Origin Effect & Language of Origin Effect

Consumers' decisions are influenced by cues such as price (Gerstner, 1985), which have been found to play a role when other information is missing, as can stereotypes about countries where the product originates from (Bannister & Sauders, 1978). Such an influence can be linked to the economic development of the home country of the product producer (Nagashima, 1970). Lacking other cues English can then act as a cue for consumers. It is likely that consumers would assume products presented in English would originate from Western industrialized countries. This combined with the association of English with success leads to a positive impression similar to that of country of origin (COO) which this research project labels language of origin (LOO). A product attribute can benefit from a "halo" effect, especially when knowledge of the specific attribute is low (Johansson et al., 1985). Numerous business researchers have studied the country of origin effect (Cattin et al., 1982; Han & Terpstra, 1988; Lampert & Jaffe, 1998) and the benefit it brings to products, yet no work has been undertaken on the influence of language.

## Brand Theory

The importance of brand theory in marketing can be traced back to the earliest time of civilization, yet formal expression of the importance of brand did not appear until Gardner and Levy's 1955 groundbreaking article. Brands were described as being more than just a name, but a representation and symbol of many ideas, and a brand could not be everything for everyone but instead had to have special meaning for some consumers. From this basis, brand research expanded and followed numerous paths. Consumers' have often been viewed as the objects of advertising, models like AIDA (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action), where they were the final step in a linear and sequential path (De Groot, 1980). Lannon and Cooper (1983) pointed out that these traditional models do not take into account the consumer participation in the process. Brands, they wrote, are part of the culture and allow a kind of shorthand in communication as well as being part of cultural rituals. Brands are bundles of meaning (Morello, 1993) to consumers. Following this line, Goodyear (1996) emphasized that brands are a dialogue between marketers and consumers, in which consumers eventually come to own the brand (brand as policy).

The role played by brands for consumers is often one of reducing search effort (and its associated costs) due to limited cognitive capabilities related to information processing (Bettman, 1979; Miller, 1956). Once imprinted, a brand can increase recall related to product selection decisions (Jacoby et al., 1977). Related to this role, brands can also reduce the risk consumers perceive in making a purchase (Bauer, 1960). Kaplan et al.(1974) pointed out that consumers can spread good word-of-mouth about a brand, helping to reduce performance uncertainties new buyers may have. It is important for marketers to understand what type of brand they have, i.e., how consumers perceive it, such as mainly functional or representational (De Chernatony, 1993), or what stage of development it is in, so as to properly support it (Caulkin, 1987). Lack of understanding the meaning of brand to the consumer (see Figure 3) can lead to consumers who know more about the brand than the brand managers themselves (De Chernatony et al., 1997).

Figure 3. Increasing levels of what a brand means to consumers
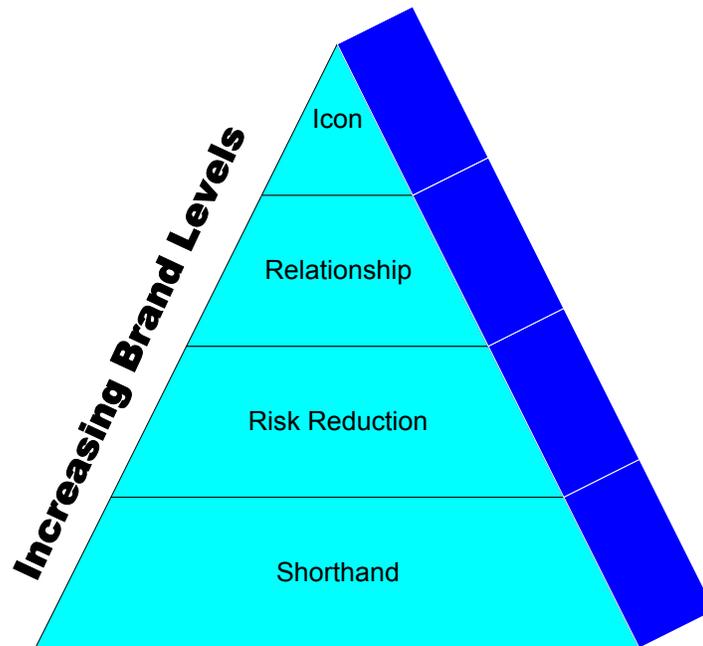


It is at the higher two levels of brand relationship and brand icon that this study asserts language learning is benefited.  Examples of brands with which Taiwan English language learners have beneficial relationships include:

ICRT: This is most likely the prototypical example in Taiwan.  It is normal that language learners of all ages listen to this radio channels programs both for entertainment, exposure to language and culture.

Studio Classroom (radio, magazines, television, rallies): Well known to young and old alike, this strong brand name has expanded over the years to different media, including most recently the Internet.  While this example is most purposefully directed toward language learning, the firm's underlying goals include political and religious messages that would otherwise be difficult for consumers in Taiwan to accept.  The strong brand name and the relationship consumers have developed with it allow the firm to pass on many more of its messages.

CNN: This global brand has worked to include language learners by offering in-class material for teachers and special programs for class use that summarize weekly news.

The Eagles (rock band): Many popular music groups could be included as examples of strong brands that have acted as entry points for Taiwan English language learners to better understand the language and culture.

These examples represent relationships with brands often have led consumers on educational odysseys they otherwise would not have undertaken.  While the above

examples are all information-based products, we could easily also include physical products, such as cars, skateboards, food, etc.  Figure 4 summarizes the variables and their relationship proposed in this study.  While each variable has been well researched (except for LOO) combining them together in a hybrid research project is quite unique.

Figure 4. Combination of variables proposed for study

```
        ┌─────────────────┐
        │  Foreign Lang.  │
        │    Learning     │
        └─────────────────┘

        ┌─────────────────┐
        │  Socialization  │
        └─────────────────┘
Inputs

        ┌──────────┐  Improved   ┌─────────────────┐
        │   LOO    │  Attitude   │     Brand       │
        │          │ ─────────▶  │ Communications  │
        └──────────┘             └─────────────────┘
             ▲                          │ Seek Out
          Increases                     ▼
        ┌─────────────────┐  Leads  ┌─────────────────┐
        │    Improved     │   to    │  Communication  │
        │   Lang. Skill   │ ◀────── │    Exposure     │
        └─────────────────┘         └─────────────────┘
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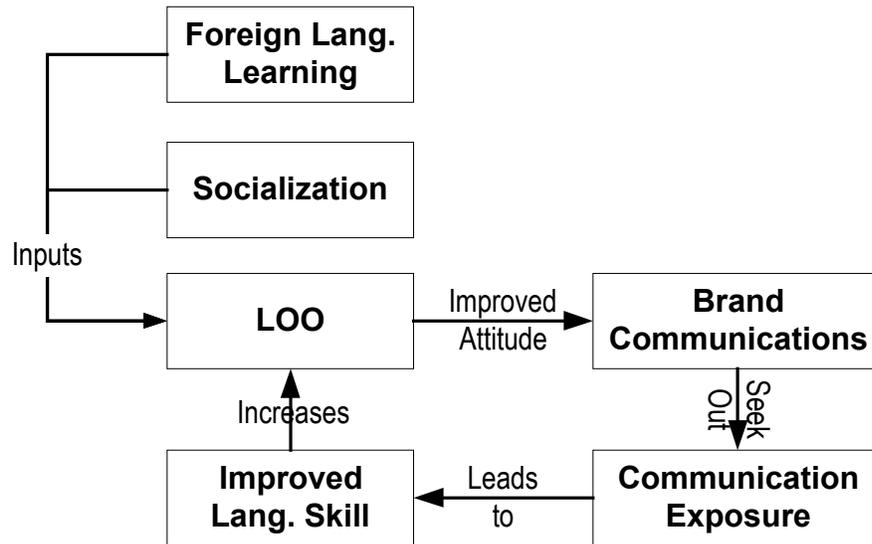
Figure 5 shows the circular and self-reinforcing flow proposed by this project for the variables under study.  Low ethnocentrism allows greater opportunity to enter the cultural onion.  Establishing relationships with brands from the target culture, a process of consumer socialization takes place that helps to take the consumer deeper into the cultural onion.  Through increased levels of LOO (Language of Origin) a person is increasingly attracted to using products from the target culture and understanding more of the context and language surrounding it.  This leads to improved levels of skill which can assist in economic targets, such as employment for example.  All this decreases ethnocentrism further and runs through the cycle again, each time pushing down through the cultural onion layers deeper and deeper.

Figure 5. Circular reinforcing flow of variables under study
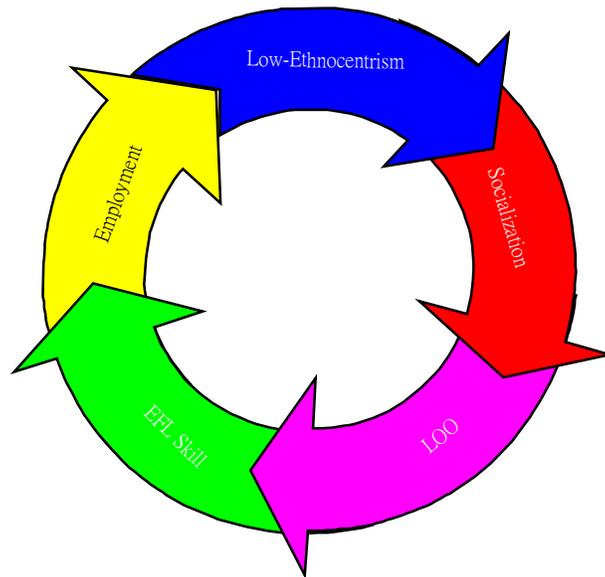
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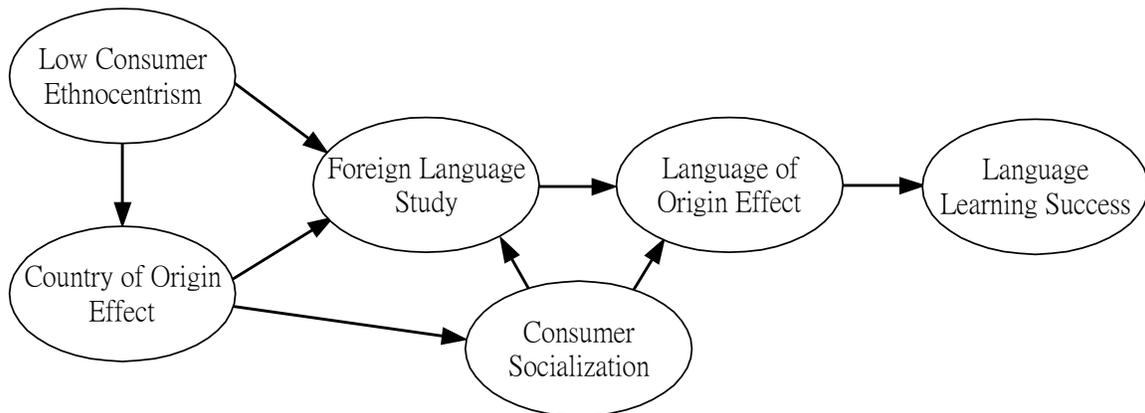# Research Design

## Research Model

Figure 6 summarizes, in a Venn diagram, the main constructs under study in this proposed project. The overlapping zones (intercepts) show the expected results. Although most constructs have been well studied and have valid instruments ready for adapting to this study, it is quite a new approach to merge theory from the usually distant social behavior domains of international business, consumer behavior, and language learning. Interdisciplinary research such as this, however, is important for improving the robustness of educational theory in general (Kerlinger & Lee).

Figure 6. Venn diagram of research topics
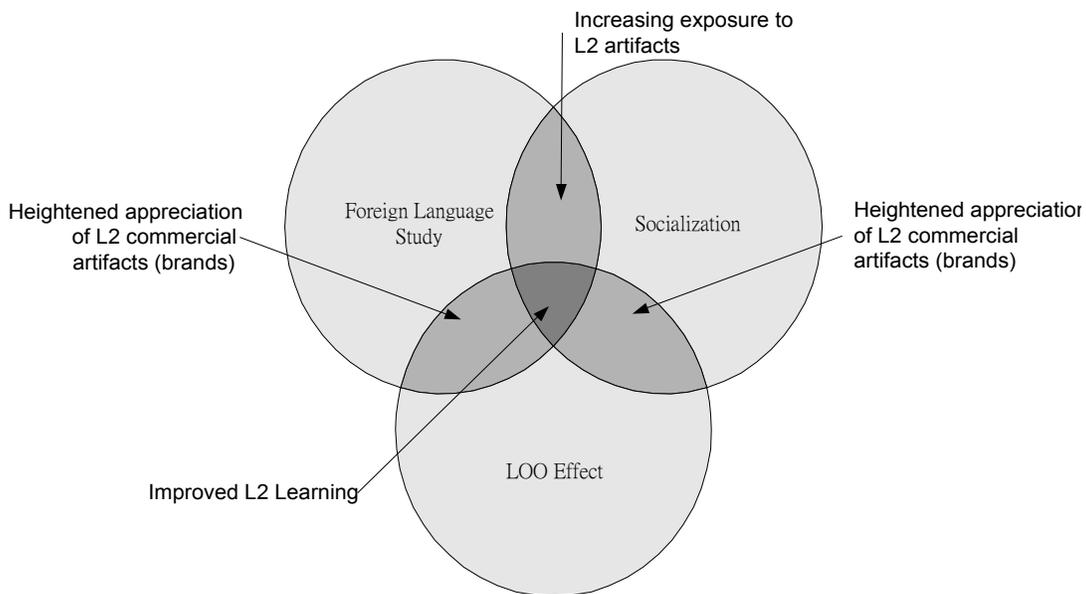


The specific model (latent variables shown) proposed in this project can be seen in Figure 7, where the foreign language construct is influenced by consumer ethnocentrism and the COO (Country of Origin) effect and consumer socialization. Foreign language study and consumer socialization both are hypothesized to increase the LOO effect, which increases the brand relationship the consumer has with the foreign brands. This in turn is hypothesized to improve language learning through increased opportunities as well as improved motivation.
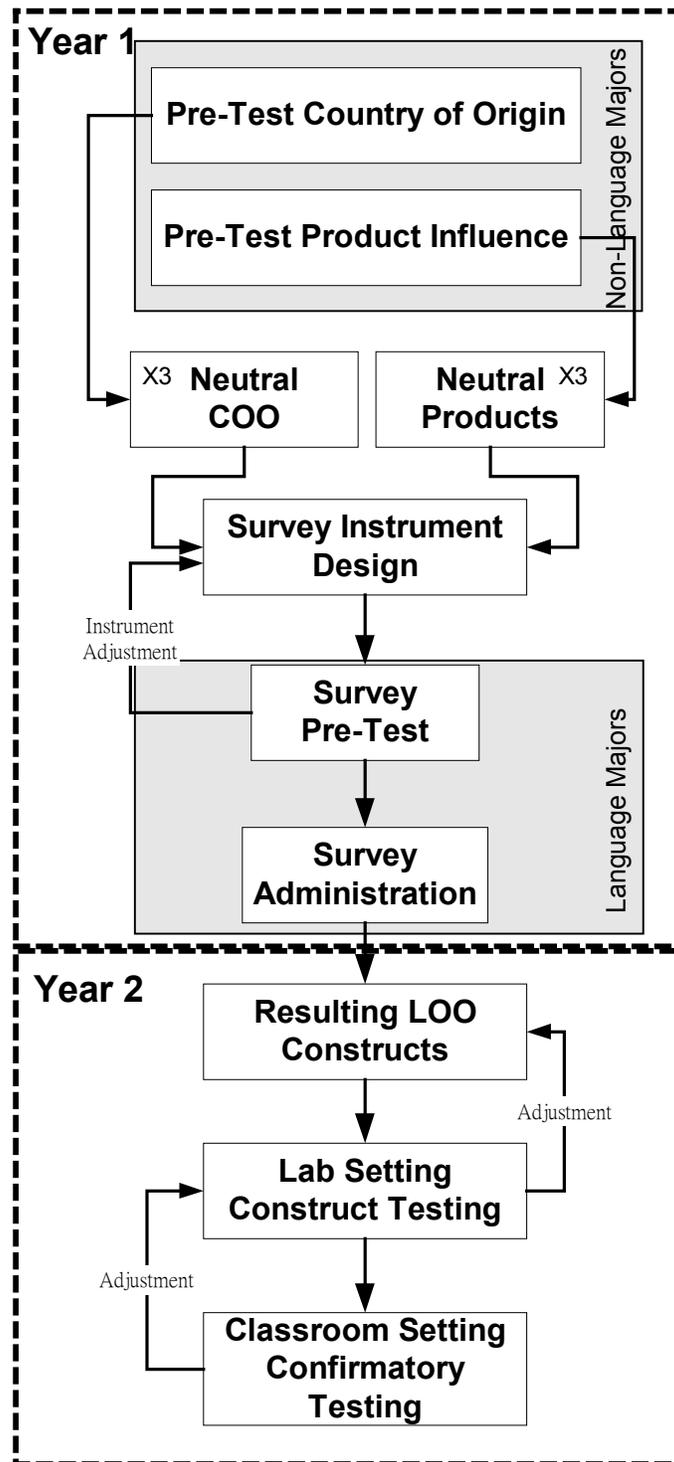
Figure 7. Research model to be tested in SEM (LISREL)



## Survey Design

This proposal's overall research steps can be seen in Figure 8. A major division is made between construct validation on non-language majors and then with language majors. This is in order to emphasize external validity and to eliminate general effects from variables that have no special influence on language majors. Many of the constructs under study have effects on consumers in general. These general effects must be teased out and blocked in the study in order to find the specific effects and combined effects with language learners in Taiwan. Thus the first goal of the project is to quantify and eliminate systematic error variance. The first year will emphasize construct development with the second year implementing results. First, results will be applied in the lab to test the potential to apply constructs directly to students in order to measure and refine the constructs. Results will be applied in a classroom setting to directly measure the positive effect commercial emphasis can have on the language learning motivation of actual students.

Figure 8. Steps of survey design and administration



Year 1

Non-Language Majors

Pre-Test Country of Origin

Pre-Test Product Influence

X3 Neutral COO

Neutral Products X3

Survey Instrument Design

Instrument Adjustment

Survey Pre-Test

Language Majors

Survey Administration

Year 2

Resulting LOO Constructs

Adjustment

Lab Setting Construct Testing

Adjustment

Classroom Setting Confirmatory Testing

*Pre-Testing*

The pre-testing stage will center on finding countries that have a neutral COO effect so that such a possibly strong effect could wash out other variances from the main variables under study. The same procedure will be followed to find products that do not have inherent aspects that will interfere with accurate measurements. The resulting products and accompanying countries of origin. A minimum of three neutral countries and three neutral products will be sought.

*Survey Instrument*

The survey design will include instruments from consumer socialization research, consumer ethnocentrism, as well as language learning constructs. Pre-testing in lab settings will solve gross problems with understandability. Expanded testing in university settings among language majors will lead to adjustments to the instrument.

When satisfied with the usability of the instrument and it overall accuracy to measure the underlying constructs, a full scale administration will be undertaken. Surveys will be administered to language students randomly selected from departments around the country. Different languages will be administered separately, such that Japanese students will be surveyed and the data separately administered from English majors. A minimum of three language majors will be sought.

## Data Analysis

A 3X3X4 factorial matrix will be used in analyzing the returned data (see Figure 9). The inclusion of three products will allow for reliability checking (internal validity) as well as cross checking among the LOO effects. Four years of student maturation will allow for the testing of increasing socialization as students increase their exposure to their language under study. Alternately, this data will allow the verification of the direction of influence, i.e., do students choose the language major because they are already socialized in the target language's culture or does the socialization begin with language study or even the possibility that socialization is sped up or slowed down while in the language department.

Figure 9. Factorial analysis design with internal validity check
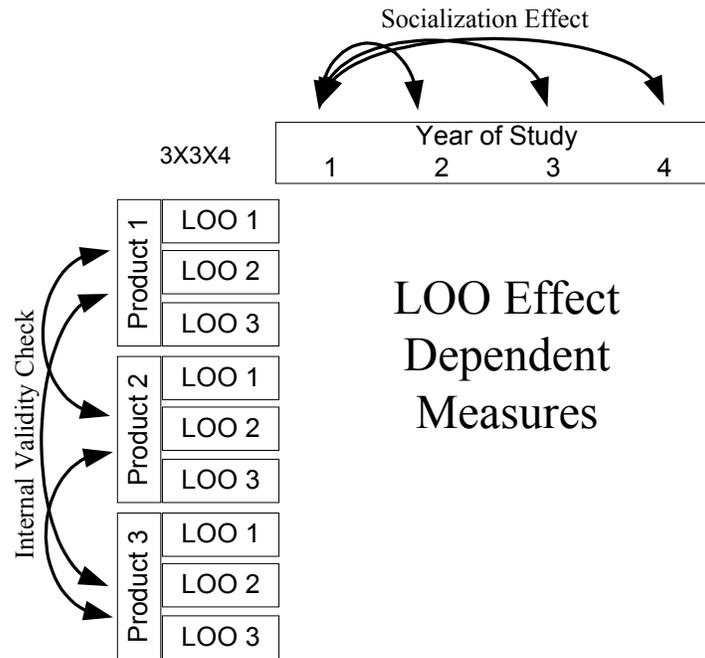
## Expected Results & Applications

Results and applications are summarized in Table 2. The main result expected is the model construction through LISREL. Overall, the model will be important to theory construction in foreign language education in general. Specific parts of the model will have more application in the classroom as well as in the design of curriculums and as a guide for how to approach students' interests.

Ethnocentrism and socialization as a constructs in FL learning can assist language teachers in predicting the characteristics of students who can succeed, or at least have increased opportunity to excel as this variable is predicted to be instrumental in students being open to entering the cultural onion. LOO (Language of Origin) will have important implications for both FL and consumer behavior domains. By operationalizing LOO, an important link between language learning and marketing will be understood. Applications are numerous, as teachers can use such knowledge to link learning to commercial aspects that students have a predisposition to be interested in. Commercial firms can use such results to improve marketing efforts in making brands better fit the expectations of international consumers.

While the link between FL skill and cultural studies has been well established, the influence of the commercial environment on this relationship has been widely overlooked. In the face of rising internationalism, foreign languages actually play a more important role than ever, as does commercial considerations of international, interdependent business activities. A quantifiable role played in FL skill improvement will be useful in breaking down the often artificial barriers between what students do outside and inside the classroom.

Table 2. Research results and applications

| Result | Theory Construction | Instructional Application | AFL/FL Dpt. Curriculum Design | Other application |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Model Confirmation (LISREL) | ✓ | | | Theory in both FL education and consumer behavior can be enhanced |
| Role of Ethnocentrism | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Tool for evaluating student success in future language program |
| Role of LOO | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Commercial firms can use this construct in international marketing |
| Role Socialization | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Degree of influence in socialization presently played by language departments |
| FL Skill Improvement | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | Merging the economic activity and educational activity that both benefit language learning |