

# Participant P3

**School Experience:** Public high school with a large Chinese student community

## **1. Can you briefly introduce yourself and tell me when you came to the United States?**

**Response:**

I am a high school student. Although I was born in the United States, my mother took me back to China when I was very young, so I grew up in China. I returned to the United States during my freshman year of high school. Because of this, I have grown up under two different cultural backgrounds.

## **2. What was the biggest challenge when you first arrived in the United States?**

**Response:**

The biggest challenge was language. When I first arrived, I could hardly understand what people were saying. I remember getting lost at school because I could not find my classroom. A girl helped me find it and talked to me the entire way, but I only understood one question she asked about my parents' jobs. I could not understand anything else she said. At that moment, I realized that language was my biggest challenge.

## **3. Can you describe your experience learning English?**

**Response:**

At first, I mainly learned English by memorizing vocabulary. Later, I realized that I could often guess the meanings of unfamiliar words from the context. The most effective way for me to improve, however, was simply talking to other people. I often encouraged others to have conversations with me, even when I could not express myself very well. I believe that communicating with others helped me improve my English the most. As a result, my spoken English is much stronger than my written English.

## **4. Do you remember a moment when language made you feel excluded, embarrassed, or misunderstood?**

**Response:**

Yes. One time, I was discussing a political topic with several Chinese friends during class. We became very passionate during the discussion, and the teacher misunderstood the situation, which made the moment rather awkward. There were also times when my classmates spoke languages that I could not understand, making me feel excluded. Another experience that made me uncomfortable was when some Chinese-speaking classmates translated English conversations into Chinese for me, even though I had already understood what was being said. I know they were trying to help, but it made me feel as though my English ability was underestimated, which was embarrassing.

### **5. Do you feel like the same person when speaking Chinese and English? Why or why not?**

#### **Response:**

No, I do not think so. When I speak Chinese, I can express my thoughts much more precisely. However, when I speak English, I often have to translate my thoughts before expressing them, and much of the original meaning gets lost in the process. I may have a very complex idea in my mind, but I can only express it in a much simpler way in English. Because of this, I do not feel like exactly the same person when speaking the two languages.

### **6. Has moving to the United States changed the way you think about being Chinese?**

#### **Response:**

My understanding of my own Chinese identity has not changed. I still consider myself Chinese. However, my understanding of other Chinese people's identities has changed. For example, many American-born Chinese (ABC) students also identify as Chinese, but they often view certain social or political issues from a different perspective than people who grew up in China. This has made me realize that there are different ways of being Chinese.

### **7. When do you feel most Chinese? Can you give an example?**

#### **Response:**

I feel most Chinese whenever someone speaks Chinese to me. Language is the most direct connection to my identity. Even if the other person is not Chinese, hearing someone speak Chinese creates an immediate sense of familiarity and cultural connection.

### **8. When do you feel most American? Can you give an example?**

#### **Response:**

I feel most American when I travel internationally. Because I hold a U.S. passport, I can enter many countries without applying for a visa. At those moments, I become especially aware of my American citizenship.

**9. Have you ever felt caught between two cultures? Can you tell me about that experience?**

**Response:**

Not really. I have grown up surrounded by different cultures since I was young, so I feel that I am quite open to both cultures. At school, I communicate in English, make friends, and live within an American environment. However, when I return home, my family continues to live a very traditional Chinese lifestyle. We speak Chinese, eat Chinese food, and use chopsticks every day. For me, moving between these two cultural environments feels natural rather than conflicting.

**10. If you could describe your identity in one sentence, what would that sentence be?**

**Response:**

I am a Teochew person who was born in the United States.

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1. 请简单介绍一下自己, 以及你是什么时候来到美国的?

回答:

我是一个普通的高中生, 也是一名女生。我出生于美国, 但小时候跟随妈妈回到中国生活, 在中国长大。直到高中九年级 (Freshman Year) 时, 我才回到美国, 因此成长过程中一直处于两种不同的文化背景之下。

2. 刚来到美国时, 你遇到的最大挑战是什么?

回答:

刚来到美国时, 我遇到的最大挑战是语言。刚入学时, 我几乎听不懂别人说话。有一次, 我在学校迷路, 找不到教室, 眼看就要迟到了。一位女生主动带我去教室, 一路上一直和我聊天, 但除了听懂她问我父母是做什么工作的之外, 其余内容我几乎一句都没有听懂。当时我深刻意识到, 语言是我来到美国后最大的挑战。

3. 你能描述一下自己学习英语的经历吗?

回答:

刚开始我主要通过背单词学习英语。后来我发现, 很多词汇其实可以结合上下文去猜测意思。对我来说, 真正帮助最大的还是和别人交流。我会主动找别人聊天, 即使自己表达得不够准确, 也会坚持开口。我认为不断和别人交流是我英语进步最快的原因。不过, 这也导致我的英语口语比书面表达更好, 我的写作能力相对较弱。

4. 你是否记得某个因为语言而感到被排斥、尴尬或被误解的时刻?

回答:

有。有一次我和几位中国朋友在课堂上讨论一个政治话题, 因为讨论得比较激动, 老师误以为发生了什么事情, 场面有些尴尬。另外, 有时候班里的同学说一些我听不懂的语言时, 我会感到被排斥。还有一种让我觉得尴尬的情况是, 有些会说中文的同学明明知道我能够听懂英文, 却仍然主动把别人说的话翻译成中文给我。他们可能是出于好意, 但这种行为让我觉得自己被低估了语言能力, 也让我感到有些尴尬。

**5. 当你说中文和说英文时, 你觉得自己是同一个人吗? 为什么?**

回答:

我觉得不是。当我说中文时, 我能够更加准确地表达自己的想法, 因为很多复杂的思考都可以直接用中文表达。而当我使用英文时, 我常常需要把脑海里的想法翻译成英语, 在翻译过程中, 很多原本想表达的意思都会被削弱。我脑海里可能有很复杂的想法, 但最后只能用一句很简单的话表达出来。因此, 我觉得说中文和说英文时的自己并不完全一样。

**6. 来到美国以后, 你对于“中国人身份”的理解有发生变化吗?**

回答:

我对自己的中国人身份并没有改变, 我始终认为自己是中国人。不过, 我对“其他中国人”的理解发生了一些变化。例如, 我发现很多 ABC (American-born Chinese) 虽然也认同自己是中国人, 但他们对于一些社会或政治议题的理解, 与长期生活在中国的人会有很大的不同。因此, 我开始意识到, 中国人身份本身也具有不同的表现方式。

**7. 在什么情况下你最能感受到自己是中国人? 能举个例子吗?**

回答:

当别人和我说中文的时候, 我最能感受到自己是中国人。语言是最直接的联系。即使对方不是中国人, 只要会说中文, 我都会觉得彼此之间存在一种特殊的文化连接, 也会更容易建立交流。

**8. 在什么情况下你最能感受到自己像美国人? 能举个例子吗?**

回答:

我觉得自己最像美国人的时候, 是出国旅行的时候。因为我是美国公民, 很多国家都可以直接使用美国护照入境, 不需要办理签证。在那些时候, 我会很明显地意识到自己拥有美国人的身份。

**9. 你有没有感到自己夹在两种文化之间? 可以分享一个相关经历吗?**

回答:

其实这种感觉并不强烈。我认为自己从小就在不同文化环境中成长, 对不同文化的接受程度比较高, 也比较包容。虽然每天在学校都使用英语, 与美国朋友交流, 但回到家之后, 我依然保持着非常典型的中国家庭生活方式, 例如吃米饭、使用筷子、和家人说中文。对我来说, 我

可以在学校使用英语生活,也可以在回家之后立刻回到熟悉的中国文化环境,两种文化能够同时存在。

**10.** 如果让你用一句话描述自己的身份认同,你会怎么说?

回答:

我是一名在美国出生的潮汕人。