

# **HERITAGE MEETS HERITAGE:**

Building a Community  
of  
Heritage Language Learners

**YALE UNIVERSITY**

•

•

# How it started

- Who knows what a heritage language learner is anyway?

# Passion brings like-minded people together



# Passion brings like-minded people together



# Heritage Meets Heritage

**GREEK**

**KOREAN**

**RUSSIAN**

**SPANISH**

**HEBREW**

**ARABIC**

**CHINESE**

**VIETNAMESE**



# W<sup>3</sup> H

## ○ **WHO**

- HL students of different languages.

## ○ **WHAT**

- Share aspects of heritage identity and experiences

## ○ **WHY**

- Foster a better understanding
- Create an inclusive HL community
- Gather information to inform curriculum

## ○ **HOW**

- Survey
  - Reflection
- Conversation (video)
  - Reflection



# Annual Project

2016

- Greek
- Korean
- Russian
- Spanish

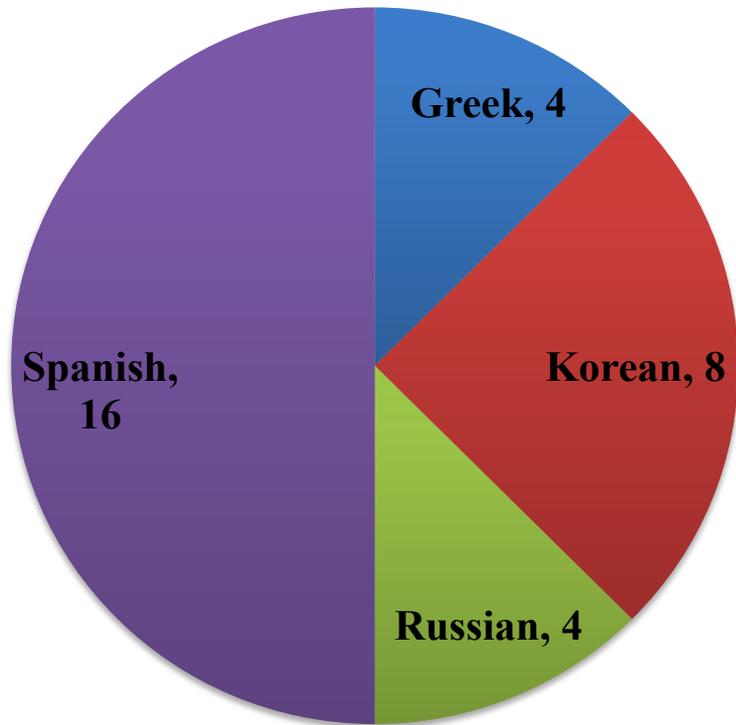
2017

- Arabic
- Chinese
- Greek
- Korean
- Hebrew
- Russian
- Spanish

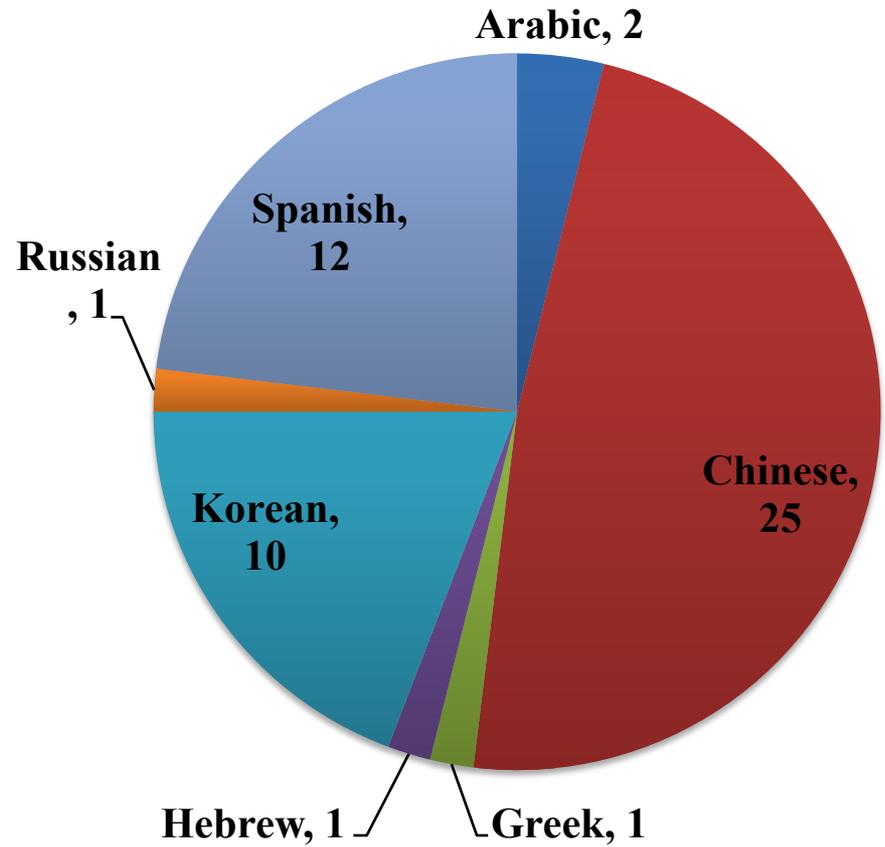
2018

- Chinese
- Greek
- Hebrew
- Korean
- Russian
- Spanish
- *Vietnamese*

# 2016

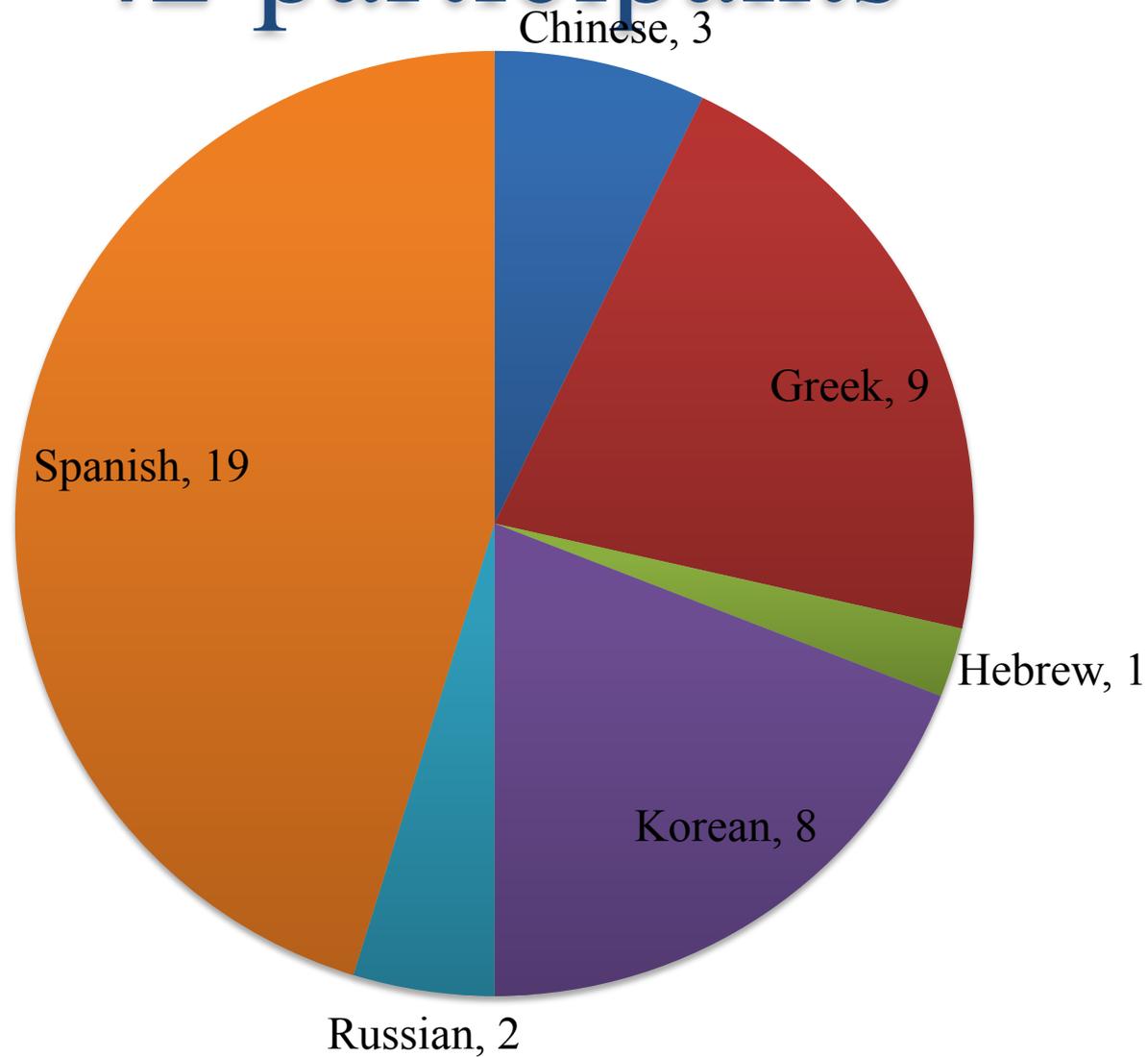


# 2017



# 2018

## 42 participants



# Survey Questions

- Q1. I am a heritage speaker of [language]
- Q2. In your own words, what is a heritage language learner?
- Q3. What is it like to be a heritage language learner?
- Q4. How is a heritage language learner different from a foreign language learner?
- Q5. What do you consider your strengths as a heritage language learner?
- Q7. What do you find most difficult when studying your heritage language?
- Q8. What strategies do you find most effective for learning your heritage language?
- Q6. What are your goals in studying your heritage language at Yale?
- Q7. How do you hope to use your heritage language in the future?





background individual exposure academic  
 community instruction family different  
 parent learn improve  
 student learner culture  
 formally speak speaker  
 study grow expose  
 person write home native  
 context formal cultural  
 household grammar  
 connection experience



frustrating  
 culture  
 read learn understand  
 better speak family  
 write difficult find  
 experience  
 grammar





It's reassuring to know that I'm not the only one who finds certain aspects of language learning difficult.



confident impact  
similar situation different  
judgement comfort  
community empowering connection  
fear identity limits  
unite friendship  
in common children ashamed  
improve family  
care  
important



When I started this project I didn't think that I would share so many experiences with my project partner.

•



During my conversation with my partner, I learned that the problems I find as an HLL are not only problems that exist in Spanish, but in other languages as well. The doubt of not knowing with which culture to identify is something that she battles as well.



Our stories, although they might be different, are similar. She also has parents who immigrated to the United States and, for that reason we have a lot in common.



For example, our parents don't understand American traditions, like Thanksgiving. I learned that although we don't share a language (other than English), we do share experiences





During my time as an HL language learner, I've learned that patience is essential... Reading the responses I realize that nobody does everything perfectly. We all have our strengths and our weaknesses, which is why we need to be patient with each other and with ourselves. We can help each other out.



What struck me the most was the passion that we share for learning our heritage language.

[video](#)

## Q2. In your own words, what is a heritage language learner?

“Being a heritage language learner is like being an archaeologist in your own mind. It is to see and understand words and grammar and concepts that have always been there, to clean them off and to be able to put them in a context so that they are no longer scattered or buried but part of a complete story. And it is to discover that there are other people with language experiences similar to your own.”



THANK YOU!

[sybil.alexandrov@yale.edu](mailto:sybil.alexandrov@yale.edu)

...