

**LINGUISTIC ABILITIES AND IDENTITY IN A GLOBALIZING WORLD:
PERSPECTIVES FROM PROFICIENT TAIWANESE ENGLISH USERS**

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SUMMARY

Linguistic Abilities and Identity in a Globalizing World:

Perspectives from Proficient Taiwanese English Users

by

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Various forces of globalization, all operating in tandem, have served to lessen the extent to which English is considered a foreign language of the 'other' for its users around the world. As more and more people use the language to facilitate communication in diverse and increasingly interconnected communities, it can no longer be assumed that its learners associate English with historically 'native' contexts of English use. Many, some scholars argue, are coming to conceptualize themselves as members of an imagined global community of English users and English as one of their own languages.

This qualitative longitudinal study takes a narrative inquiry approach, presenting the stories of four young adult Taiwanese focal participants that are all quite proficient English users. It examines the role that linguistic abilities (particularly English abilities, but also French, Italian, and local languages) play in these participants' identity construction processes, their affiliations with and sense of ownership in the English language, and how their lives are impacted by their internalization of various globalization discourses. These include the discourses

of internationalization and competitiveness that are continuously put forth by the Taiwan government, as well as enterprise culture discourses, which emphasize the importance of qualities associated with the 'entrepreneurial self,' such as self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals.

With a theoretical lens that incorporates various concepts, such as Norton's notion of investment and Bucholtz & Hall's sociocultural linguistic approach to identity, this study chronicles focal participants' experiences over the course of the year following their graduation from a college specializing in languages, documenting their participation in different sorts of communities (communities of practice, Discourse communities, and imagined communities) as well as their sometimes shifting language affiliations. The extent to which participants were found to claim ownership in the English language varied, and whether they oriented more toward membership in an imagined global community of English users or associated the English language more with speakers from traditionally English-speaking Western countries was largely dependant on what communities they happened to have found themselves participating in. For all four participants, however, their English abilities have served, throughout their lives (since elementary school in most cases), to differentiate them from others, making *someone who is good at English* (relative to their peers) an integral part of their identities. All of them also associated English with upward mobility and considered it an essential tool for making one's voice heard in the world today.

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Chapter 1

A Globalizing World

1.1 Introduction

The central concern of this dissertation is the relationship between linguistic abilities and identity – how what one can do with language impacts the sense of who one is. "The question 'Who am I?,'” Norton (1997) asserts, “cannot be understood apart from the question 'What can I do?'" (p. 410). To this statement, I will add "What do I *wish* to do?" as being an equally consequential question to consider, for as West (1992) points out, “How you construct your identity is predicated on how you construct desire” (p. 20).

Today’s globalizing world presents many of its denizens an unprecedented array of potential aspirations, many of which necessitate the use of English. This, according to Halliday (2003), is the very circumstance that causes an international lingua franca to take root. “Things can be done with this language,” he explains, “– things that [people] want to do – that cannot be done, or done successfully, without it" (p. 412). Indeed, if one wishes to be engaged today in domains of science, technology, diplomacy, or travel, English is arguably indispensable. Since no single language has ever before been employed on such a massive scale, it is not surprising that there has been much scholarly debate on the phenomenon of global English use and its political, sociocultural, ideological, and pedagogical implications.

In applied linguistics circles, one of the most polarizing areas of the global English debate has been the English as a lingua franca (ELF) research paradigm, which critics contend aims to impose new norms on learners of English. ELF research focuses on communication in which English is indeed functioning as a true lingua franca – “a ‘contact language’ between persons who share neither a common native tongue nor a common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen *foreign* language of communication” (Firth, 1996, p. 240, italics in original). Stressing the significance of the name *English as a lingua franca*, one of its main proponents, Jenkins (2000) explains, “the Latin name symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone” (p. 11).

Directly related to identity, the ability to claim ownership of English is an important theme of this dissertation. Although linguists have long asserted that individuals who have learned English as a second or foreign language can rightly claim ownership of the language¹, many researchers (e.g., Ke, 2009; Matsuda, 2003, Yildirim & Okan, 2007) have found such individuals extremely reluctant to claim English ownership. Other scholars, however, offer more optimistic assessments of their study participants’ capacity for ownership claims. Kawanami & Kawanami (2009) report seeing “a glimpse of potential ownership” (p. 58) in comments made by their Japanese junior and senior high school student participants. Phan (2009) found her study participants, international students from various Asian countries taking English medium courses at a Thai university,

¹ Almost 20 years ago, Nelson (1992), for example, proclaimed, “Each English user must now say ‘It is my language’ and then adapt it variously to appropriate contexts, in ‘my’ culture or another’s” (p. 337).

to have already developed “a healthy and sensible sense of sharing the ownership of English” (p. 201). Such reports of potential and realized English ownership support the prediction by Warschauer (2000) that

as a result of changes in globalization, employment, and technology, L2 speakers of English will use the language less as an object of foreign study and more as an additional language of their own to have an impact on and change the world. They will use English, together with technology, to express their identity and make their voices heard (p. 530)².

This dissertation is a qualitative multi-case study in which the focal participants were chosen specifically because I felt they personified the L2 speakers of English that Warschauer describes in the above prediction. These four Taiwanese young women were my former students – English users who, in my internet communication with them in the years following my departure from Taiwan, seemed to regard English as one of *their* languages as they confidently used it to project various aspects of their identities online. This dissertation tells their stories, examining the role that their ability to use English and other languages played in their identity construction, their sense of ownership in the English language, and how the internalization of various globalization discourses impacted their lives throughout the duration of the study.

In this chapter, I first take a closer look at what exactly the phrase *a globalizing world* entails, examining the notion of globalization and various

² Warschauer is by no means alone in expressing this belief. Graddol (1997, 2007), for example, makes similar predictions.

conceptualizations of the global spread of English. I then introduce my research questions and discuss the significance of this study.

1.2 Globalization

The term *globalization*, so frequently regarded as a taken-for-granted common sense principle and more often than not bandied about with no definition whatsoever, has actually reached the level of mass consciousness only in relatively recent years. In fact, according to Ghafele (2004), none of the major encyclopedias of the world, such as Larousse or Encyclopedia Britannica, included entries for or references to the term until the early 1990's. When *globalization* is defined, the different theorists positing these definitions showcase somewhat differing perspectives.

A definition such as "the broadening and deepening of national economies into a worldwide market for goods, services and capital" (Ohiorhenuan, 2000, p. 56) does not necessarily depict globalization as a new phenomenon at all. Such a definition could easily apply to a great many instances of intensified trade throughout history. Trade in Indian spices and textiles, for example, served to link the then-known world for centuries and brought radical changes to European culture and tastes.

Giddens (1990) does not restrict globalization to the domain of economics, defining it more broadly as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distinct localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring miles away and vice versa" (p. 64). In one sense, this definition

is significantly broader, focusing on "social relations" instead of just economic ones. In other ways, however, this definition is more specific in its emphasis on the impact felt by localities.

Still other theorists offer definitions that include an aspect of conscious awareness by the masses. Waters (1995), for instance, defines globalization as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (p. 3). Robertson (1992) also includes this dimension of consciousness in his definition: "both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (p. 9).

Friedman (2005) conceptualizes globalization as having occurred in three distinct phases: *Globalization 1.0*, *Globalization 2.0*, and *Globalization 3.0*. *Globalization 1.0*, Friedman explains, basically began in 1492 with Columbus' voyage to the Americas, which triggered imperialistic expansion by European powers. *Globalization 2.0*, he contends, began around 1800 and was powered by the industrial revolution. Friedman goes on to discuss ten forces that have jointly brought about the recent transition to *Globalization 3.0*. These ten forces, which he terms *flatteners*, are: the collapse of the Soviet Union, the increase in internet connectivity, the development of work flow software, internet uploading, outsourcing, supply-chaining, insourcing, the proliferation and development of internet search tools, and lastly, other new mobile technological advances that he dubs "the steroids...to amplify and further empower all the other forms of

collaboration" (p. 198). Friedman contrasts the three different phases of globalization as follows:

While the dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was countries globalizing and the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was companies globalizing, the dynamic force in Globalization 3.0 – the force that gives it its unique character – is the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally (p. 10).

Friedman later qualifies this statement about the empowerment of individuals, explaining that Globalization 3.0, in fact, only offers the potential for the empowerment of *some* individuals. "There are hundreds of millions of people on this planet," he reminds us, "who have been left behind by the flattening process or feel overwhelmed by it" (p. 461).

In his introduction to a *Journal of Sociolinguistics* special issue devoted to the topic of globalization, Coupland (2003) lists four defining globalization concepts that he says have been helpful in his own research: *commodification*, *disembedding*, *community interdependence*, and *the compression of time and space*. All four of these defining concepts have, over the course of the last few decades, profoundly impacted language learning and teaching throughout the world. Some researchers, for instance – most notably Heller (2003) – have argued that languages are increasingly being regarded as economic commodities and less as markers of national or ethnic identity. As Block & Cameron (2002) point out, this shift toward viewing languages as commodities "affects both people's motivations for learning languages and their choices about which

languages to learn. It also affects the choices made by institutions (local and national, public and private) as they allocate resources for language education" (p. 5). The disembedding of English from its historically 'native' contexts for use as a lingua franca on a global scale, and the interdependence between communities that has necessitated large scale intercultural communication have both also had great repercussions on the choices made by language learners and policy makers alike. Finally, *the compression of time and space*, facilitated by new technologies such as various forms of computer mediated communication and satellite television, has radically altered the degree and nature of language learners' interaction with the world beyond their immediate localities.

1.3 The Spread of English

Facilitating globalization's compression of time and space, and indeed making it possible for the globalization process to proceed at warp speed, is the global spread of English, and responses to this phenomenon have been no less diverse than reactions to globalization itself. As Ryan (2006) notes, the spread of English "may be seen as a utopian development fostering greater understanding and communication while creating opportunities for its users, or it can be regarded as a dystopian process imposing language as the tool of one particular economic system, denying diversity and opportunity to others" (p. 28). Scholarly accounts of the process also represent a broad range of orientations. Pennycook (2001) identifies six different approaches that have been used to conceptualize the role of English in the modern world: the *colonial celebratory* position, *laissez-faire*

liberalism, linguistic imperialism, language ecology and language rights, linguistic hybridity, and postcolonial performativity.

Of these approaches, the most conservative by far is the *colonial celebratory* position, which views the English language as being superior to all others, both intrinsically and in its possible range of functions. Adherents to this position, therefore, see the English language's dominance over others as being right and natural. Despite the fact that few academics these days would blatantly espouse this position, Pennycook (2001) maintains that its influence should not be underestimated.

The position that seems to hold the most sway among academics is the one Pennycook (2001) calls *laissez-faire liberalism*. According to this approach, English and local languages are perfectly capable of harmonious co-existence, with local languages being used for local purposes and English serving as a language of wider communication. This is a view that is certainly appealing, offering English language educators a way to justify their trade, while at the same time feeling secure in the knowledge that they are maintaining respect for other languages. The *laissez-faire liberal* view has faced criticism, however, for being overly simplistic and socially naïve in the way it conceptualizes language complementarity, "assigning to English a role of global communication while other languages are condemned to do the homework of identity" (Pennycook, 2003: 516). Phillipson (1999) also finds fault with the *laissez-faire liberal* approach, arguing that its uncritical political stance in effect endorses all the ills of globalization and imperialism.

Phillipson's (1992) own *linguistic imperialism* approach characterizes the spread of English as beginning with British and American governments actively promoting the English language in their colonies and the dominance of English continuing to be maintained through various hegemonic forces in order to support political and economic interests. In recent years, this approach has been critiqued extensively, most notably by Brutt-Griffler (2002, 2006), who questions the historical accuracy of Phillipson's work, arguing that "the spread of English was not unilaterally *imposed on* passive subjects, but *wrested from* an unwilling imperial authority as part of the struggle by them against colonialism" (Brutt-Griffler, 2002: 31, italics in original). Brutt-Griffler (2002) and Pennycook (2001) also criticize the lack of agency afforded to individuals in the *linguistic imperialism* framework, since residents of *periphery* countries choosing to use English or other exogenous languages are regarded, under Phillipson's approach, not as exercising free will, but instead acting merely as tools of hegemonic neo-colonialist forces.

Closely related ideologically to the *linguistic imperialism* view is the *language ecology and language rights* perspective (e.g., Mühlhäusler, 1996; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003). Utilizing the environmentalist ecology metaphor to full effect, this approach characterizes English and other exogenous languages as imminent threats to local languages, emphasizing the need to focus attention on the preservation of local languages and support language rights. While the notion of standing up for linguistic human rights is indeed an admirable sentiment, this approach suffers from the same basic problem

that plagues the *linguistic imperialism* framework in that it reduces the wide range of complex linguistic situations present in the world today to black and white political struggles between indigenous and killer foreign languages. Mufwene (2002) takes issue with such characterizations, reminding us that "languages do not kill languages; their own speakers do, giving them up..." (p. 20).

In contrast to the absolutism of the *linguistic imperialism* and *language ecology and language rights* frameworks that view languages in contact as necessarily being in competition, the approach Pennycook (2001) terms *linguistic hybridity* focuses on how English has been adapted to suit local contexts, creating new institutionalized varieties of English. This position is best exemplified by the world Englishes paradigm and its model of concentric circles (Kachru, 1985), which conceptualizes all the varieties of English in the world as falling into one of three concentric circles: the inner circle, which includes only the countries where English is traditionally spoken as a native language (England, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand); the outer circle, where English has a substantial societal role and often official status (mostly former British colonies, such as India and Singapore); and the expanding circle, which basically includes the rest of the world – countries where the status of English is that of a foreign language that can generally be acquired only through education.

Some of the work done within the world Englishes paradigm explicitly questions the hegemonic forces that privilege inner circle norms, challenging the notion that inner circle speakers have exclusive ownership of the language (e.g., Kachru, 1982). More often, however, such arguments remain implicit and the

focus is instead on description, pointing out how features of outer circle English varieties are, in fact, highly systematic (rather than mere errors), with the underlying goal of establishing legitimacy for these varieties on the basis of such systematicity. The lack of an overt critical perspective in much of the literature on world Englishes has resulted in charges of apolitical relativism being leveled at the paradigm by Canagarajah (1999) and others.

Pennycook (2003) identifies several other shortcomings that weaken the world Englishes paradigm. The most disconcerting aspect of the paradigm, he contends, is the way that it "constructs speaker identity along national lines" (p. 519), deterministically assigning specific varieties of English to individuals according to what country they happen to live in and which of the concentric circles that country is located within. Pennycook (2003) also asserts that the world Englishes paradigm has actually perpetuated the native/non-native speaker dichotomy. While acknowledging that the paradigm has done an admirable job of challenging the right of 'native speakers'³ to dictate English standards and norms, he also charges that "it has generally failed to question the NS/NNS dichotomy in any profound fashion, and indeed has supported an insidious divide between 'native' and indigenized English" (p. 520). In addition to these criticisms, Pennycook (2003) also labels the world Englishes paradigm "insistently exclusionary" (p. 521), and there is indeed much basis for this charge, since, with its focus on revealing the systematic nature of institutionalized English varieties, the

³ Following Prodromou (2008), I put the term 'native speaker' in single quotes throughout this dissertation to indicate that I question the validity of the term and don't hold a deficit view of L2 use.

paradigm has chosen to ignore much English use in the world that it views as either too complex or too unsystematic.

Of the six approaches to the global spread of English that Pennycook (2001) identifies, it is *postcolonial performativity* that he tentatively endorses as "a useful way forward" (p. 72). According to Pennycook (2001), the focus in this perspective is the examination of various forms of appropriation and resistance employed by English language users in particular contexts, conducted with an awareness of the complex interplay of local and global politics, as well as the history of language use in the particular context in question. Pennycook (2003) sketches out the requirements for such an approach in a bit more detail, arguing that any treatment of globalization, and by extension, the global spread of English, "cannot be reduced to old arguments about homogeneity or heterogeneity, or nation states and imperialism, but instead needs to be viewed in terms of translocalizations and transcultural flows" (p. 524). This *postcolonial performativity* approach, I feel, allows researchers to document complexities of the spread of English far better than the other perspectives discussed here. Pennycook (2001) does note, however, that there is the potential, with this approach, to romanticize appropriation, with a focus on hybridity and appropriation all too easily sliding "into an apolitical celebration of difference" (p. 72).

Within all of the approaches summarized by Pennycook (2001), issues of the ownership of English and the place of the so-called 'native speaker' are central. Rajagopalan (1997), for example, asserts that the categories of 'native speaker'

and 'non-native speaker' are themselves "the result of insidiously applying certain strategies of exclusion to a world that no longer lends itself to such division into such neat compartments" (p. 230). Others question the pedagogical relevance of 'native speaker' norms to those learning English in much of the world. Seidlhofer (2001), for instance, points out that "the majority of uses of English occur in contexts where it serves as a lingua franca, far removed from its native speakers' linguacultural norms and identities" (pp. 133-134). This is a point of crucial importance, since, in a world where speakers in a handful of Western countries can no longer claim exclusive ownership of the language and a large percentage of English users might have no use for the models provided by these 'native speakers,' it is now being argued that English users are increasingly abandoning notions that English is inextricably linked to Anglo cultures, and instead relating the language to a vague concept of global culture. Csizér & Dörnyei (2005), for example, contend that English "is turning into an increasingly international language, rapidly losing its national cultural base and becoming associated with a global culture" (p. 30). Yashima (2002) observes this happening in the Japanese context, concluding that "English seems to represent something vaguer and larger than the American community in the minds of young Japanese learners. For many learners, English symbolizes the world around Japan, something that connects them to foreign countries and foreigners" (p. 57).

1.4 Research Questions

In the study that this dissertation documents, I chronicle the lives of my four Taiwanese focal participants in order to better understand the role that their linguistic abilities (especially English abilities) have played in their identity construction processes. Orientations toward English – specifically the extent to which they associate it with the Western ‘other’ – and their internalization of globalization discourses, such as those of enterprise culture, are two issues that could also potentially exert great influence on participants’ identities and are, therefore, additional areas that I investigated. The specific questions that I sought to answer in this study are the following:

1. How and to what extent do participants' linguistic abilities impact their identities?
2. To what extent are participants orienting toward membership in an imagined global community of English users (as opposed to associating English with speakers in traditionally English-speaking Western countries)?
3. To what extent do observed qualities associated with the entrepreneurial self appear to affect participants’ success during their first year after graduation?
4. To what extent do participants' orientations toward English and the future imagined communities they envision for themselves correspond to the orientations and imagined communities that teachers and curriculum developers at their college envision for them?

This study's major point of significance, above and beyond all else, is simply the fact that it solicits students' thoughts, aspirations, and stories about their lived experiences in their own voices. As Kanno (2003) points out, "student voice has traditionally not been a large part of educational discourse" (p. 142). Students themselves are seldom consulted in any manner when policy makers and curriculum developers are making decisions that affect students' lives and learning trajectories. I agree wholeheartedly, however, with Huang (2006) when she asks "How can decisions be made for students without first gaining some insight into their lives? How can decisions be made for students without first having knowledge about how they feel, what they do, and why?" (p. 33). I, therefore, see this study as a response to the call by Gee, Hull, & Lankshear (1996) for educators and researchers to "confront directly, at a fundamental level...the nature of language, learning, and literacy in and out of school" (p. 158).

Since teachers interact with their students on a daily basis, they are certainly in a better position to know and understand the realities of their students' lived experiences than most policy makers. But how well do teachers really know their students? And when students do open up and reveal aspects of their lives to teachers, how carefully do teachers really listen to what their students have to say? Just as teachers often seem to forget, when assigning homework, that their students have assignments from other classes as well, we often forget that students have lives outside our classrooms. A greater understanding of these lives outside the classroom – the various communities (including imagined ones) that students affiliate with and participate in, as well as the unique histories that they

bring with them to the classroom – would almost certainly influence most teachers' classroom practices.

A better understanding of the future imagined communities that students envision themselves participating in could also lead to more appropriate and effective pedagogical practices. Teachers and curriculum developers, without a doubt, envision particular future communities for the students they serve, and when these assumed futures are not aligned with the ones they envision for themselves, students are likely to question the relevance of the education they are receiving. A necessary measure then in ensuring that the imagined communities envisioned by all are in relative alignment, and thus optimizing the language learning experience, is to listen to students' voices.

Two existing studies by Huang (2006) and Ke (2009) do elicit Taiwanese university students' perspectives on issues of identity and the role of English in their lives. A feature of this study that makes it significant and distinct from these studies, however, is its micro-focus on one group of students that are by no means typical Taiwanese students in terms of their success in gaining English proficiency. As English majors in a college program in which all instruction was in English, these students had five years of intensive English study – far more than the more typical college students that participated in the studies by Huang (2006) and Ke (2009). Immediately after completing junior high school at the age of approximately 15 or 16, my participants made the decision to devote the next five years of their lives to becoming proficient in English. What in their prior histories influenced such a decision? What unique experiences might they have

had during the course of their college experience that could have served to maintain and strengthen their identities as English users? Could it be possible that these students might have internalized the government discourses of competitiveness and internationalization to an exceptional degree? These are the sorts of questions that are of particular relevance to participants of this study – English users that could arguably be at the forefront of the phenomenon that Warschauer (2000) describes in his prediction of L2 English speakers using "the language less as an object of foreign study and more as an additional language of their own to have an impact on and change the world" (p. 530).

The extent to which participants view English as "an additional language of their own" – the issue addressed in research question (2) – is potentially of great significance since this could also influence the relevance of classroom materials and practices. The vast majority of English teaching materials, especially those published in Western countries such as the U.S. and England, associate the language specifically with the cultures of these countries. The assumptions on the part of curriculum developers who choose such materials is that the students they serve also associate English with speakers in traditionally English speaking Western countries and that students will actually be interested in and motivated by such materials. The status of English as a global language in the world today, however, provides ample reason to question such assumptions. If English learners are, in fact, associating the English language not with the cultures and speakers of countries like the U.S. and England, and instead relating it to a concept of global culture (however vague this might be) and viewing themselves

as members of an imagined global community of English users, classroom materials and practices should appeal to this feeling of group membership and the ownership in the language that could come with it.

Research question (3) regarding qualities associated with the entrepreneurial self is more directly related to this study's other research questions than is perhaps readily apparent. In the discourses of English in Taiwan, use of English indexes competitiveness and a modern international perspective – all highly valued and encouraged in present day Taiwan. Although the participants of Huang's (2006) study all showed evidence of constructing identities that reflected the government's discourse of internationalization and competitiveness, some of them also reported frequently being reluctant to speak English out of fear that others would think they were showing off. This sort of reluctance is at odds with the 'entrepreneurial self' qualities of assertiveness and self-confidence that are so valued in enterprise culture. One indicator of this study's participants' entrepreneurial self qualities was stories in which they displayed boldness and lack of reluctance to speak English – to proudly show off their English abilities that are so valued and encouraged in the discourses that constantly circulate around them. Displaying such boldness does potentially pose a dilemma in the Taiwan context, where modesty is traditionally valued. In today's Taiwan, however, globalization is placing new demands on everyone it touches and new ways of being are emerging as a result. My findings could potentially inform language programs in Taiwan and perhaps other East Asian contexts that seek to prepare students for enterprise culture workplaces. As Kramsch (2007) and Wee

(2008) point out, English language teaching has the potential to empower learners and prepare them to meet the new demands that globalization has imposed. The extent to which this can be accomplished in particular contexts, however, depends on how well we understand and can respond to the specific challenges posed to English learners in each locale.

Chapter 2

Key Issues & Theoretical Concepts

In this chapter, I discuss a variety of concepts in order to clarify the theoretical approach I am utilizing to frame this dissertation. Identity and bilingualism are clearly central to this study. Other concepts – namely Rampton's (1990, 1995) expertise/affiliation/inheritance framework for discussing linguistic identities, Norton Pierce's (1995) notion of investment, communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), Discourse communities (Gee, 1996), and imagined communities (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003) – all provide, I feel, appropriate lenses with which to view different aspects of study participants' identity construction. I close the chapter by discussing enterprise culture and the entrepreneurial self – two additional themes that are featured prominently in this study.

2.1 Identity

Over the course of the last 30 years, sociolinguistic approaches to identity have evolved from the early Labovian variationist studies, which generally assumed relatively fixed identities, to the contemporary view that identity "is not static but dynamic and fluid...existing in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction (Thomas & Schwarzbaum, 2005: 5). Regarding identity in this manner challenges the traditional folk belief that the self is coherent, stable, located within the individual, and resistant to changes in context.

While folk beliefs of personhood see the self as "being independent of webs of interlocation" (Taylor, 1989:36), the self has come to be viewed, in the years since Gumperz's (1982) groundbreaking *Language and Social Identity*, as a product of human interaction, and in this "web of interlocation" from which identities emerge, context is all-important. Different identities are relevant in the wide variety of situations we find ourselves in and the relationships we have with different people. Individuals, as well as groups⁴, continuously enact various social roles, and it is through this enactment, largely with language, that various identities are actively being constructed. While the social roles of father, husband, and co-worker might be a person's relevant identities in certain situations, the same man, in different situations, might find age, gender, race, ethnicity, or his affiliations with any number of groups to be the relevant categories for his ongoing identity construction. A person's identity, in its current conceptualization, is clearly not simply an assigned social category, but instead "a network of identities, reflecting the many commitments, allegiances, loyalties, passions, and hatreds everyone tries to handle in ever-varying compromise strategies" (Tabouret-Keller, 1997:321).

With the wide variety of ways that identity can emerge in interaction, researchers have, not surprisingly, formulated and utilized varying frameworks appropriate for the different aspects of identity they wished to focus on. These have ranged from the reactive dimension of identity construction seen in communication accommodation theory (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991), in

⁴ Calhoun (1994), for example, points out that collective group identities are constructed *through* political participation rather than existing *prior to* such participation.

which stylistic variation is attributed primarily to speakers responding to their interlocutors, to the more agentive orientation of Le Page & Tabouret-Keller's (1985) seminal work, which emphasizes the "acts of identity" that individuals project in their language. Tabouret-Keller (1997) notes, however, that while linguistic behavior is indeed an important resource, "virtually any product of the imagination can be employed for purposes of identification" (p. 321). Bearing this fact in mind, Eckert (2004) advocates an ethnographic approach that seeks to understand how all an individual's resources – linguistic and non-linguistic – are combined to create personae that carry specific meanings in their local contexts. Although it is the linguistic resources that remain her main focus of attention, the indexical meaning of linguistic variables, according to Eckert (2004), is "vivified – given greater specificity – in a given style as it is combined with other variables and embedded in the speaker's wider linguistic and non-linguistic practice" (p. 41). In Eckert's (1989, 2000) ethnographic study of suburban high school students, for example, it was only in conjunction with a wide array of other variables, such as clothing, hairstyles, and musical preference that linguistic variables took on social meaning as components of the two distinct styles that were relevant to that particular high school context.

Recognizing that the approaches to identity mentioned above and others are complementary rather than competing, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) have recently developed a theoretical framework that, through its breadth and flexibility, manages to tie together decades of prior research on language and identity from various fields, including social psychology, linguistic anthropology,

sociolinguistics, and several sociolinguistic sub-fields, such as critical discourse analysis and conversation analysis. Referring to these fields collectively as *sociocultural linguistics* – a "broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society" (p.586), Bucholtz & Hall call their own framework a *sociocultural linguistic* approach and define identity simply as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586) – a definition that is intentionally as flexible and broad as the framework it accompanies.

The framework that Bucholtz & Hall propose is comprised of five fundamental principles that represent the different approaches to identity taken by scholars from various sociocultural linguistic disciplines: the emergence principle, the positionality principle, the indexicality principle, the relationality principle, and the partialness principle. The emergence principle emphasizes the emergence of identity in interaction, arguing that interaction is where all identity resources obtain social meaning. With the partialness principle, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) state that identity is not "simply a collection of broad social categories" (p.591), such as religion, age, gender, and social class, but also more transient stances and participant roles individuals take in specific interactions. The indexicality principle concerns the various linguistic processes speakers employ to construct their identities in interaction – indexing particular social meanings, sometimes overtly, but also more subtly through linguistic features, implicatures, and evaluative stances. The relationality principle highlights the fact that it is only in relation to other groups, individuals, and available identities that any identity obtains social meaning and reminds identity researchers that besides *similarity*

and *difference* (termed *adequation* and *distinction*), identities are also constructed through other complementary relations, such as *genuineness/artifice* and *authority/illegitimacy*. Finally, the partialness principle posits that since identity is multidimensional, an account of any one dimension is merely a partial one.

Bucholtz & Hall (2005) point out that the emergence of identity through interaction is most obvious when speakers use language that is unexpected for someone of their gender, ethnicity, race, or nationality. In such instances, the taken for granted one-to-one mapping between language and social categories is effectively shattered, highlighting the importance of the specific contexts and interactions from which the unexpected language use springs forth. Rampton (1995), for example, describes cases of "language crossing" among a group of adolescents in a multiethnic British neighborhood. These adolescents, Rampton reports, often used language that would normatively be assigned to friends and classmates of other ethnic groups. Caucasian boys, for instance, would occasionally use Punjabi words or phrases, but only in certain interactional contexts, such as jovial kidding around with Punjabi friends in informal situations. Such contexts, according to Rampton, serve as sites where speakers negotiate for the right to "cross", simultaneously calling attention to and questioning notions of ethnic difference. Language crossing, he claims, could potentially play an important role in the construction of what Hall (1992) calls 'new ethnicities' – hybrid socially constructed ethnic identities "predicated on difference and diversity" (p. 258).

While the emergence of hybrid ethnic identities is, without a doubt, a very real phenomenon, we must keep in mind that the production of innovative ethnic identities is seldom a smooth uncontested process. A number of studies, such as Bucholtz (1997), Cutler (1999), and Lo (1999), show that attempts to appropriate language and markers of ethnic identity not normatively considered one's own are more often than not rejected on the grounds that they are inauthentic and lack legitimacy. Anyone seeking to fashion a new ethnic identity for themselves is clearly in for a challenge. As Rappa & Wee (2006) remind us, ethnic identities, more so than other sorts of identities, are resistant to change. They attribute the resilience of ethnic identities to their symbolic historical nature, described by Smith (1991) as:

a sense of continuity on the part of successive generations of a given cultural unit...shared memories of earlier events and periods in the history of that unit and...notions entertained by each generation about the collective destiny of that unit and its culture (p. 25)⁵.

Rappa & Wee (2006) describe Smith's characterization of ethnic identity as "relatively fixed, though by no means essentialist" (p. 136) and credit the symbolic and historical nature of ethnic identification for the difficulties seen in studies of individuals seeking to negotiate innovative ethnic identities. Chew (2007) argues, however, that despite the resilience of historical aspects of culture

⁵ Kroskrity (1993) provides an excellent example of a group's history serving as a powerful force for maintaining ethnic identity. In his series of essays on the Arizona Tewa, whose ancestors split from the rest of the Tewa tribe in the 1800's and migrated to Arizona to live among the Hopi tribe, Kroskrity examines linguistic practices that the group still engage in to differentiate themselves from the Hopi.

and ethnicity, the changing realities of our globalizing world make individuals and nations more likely to abandon such notions in favor of more pragmatic and materialistic identities based on mass consumption. "The smaller and the more vulnerable a country perceives itself to be," she states, "the more it is willing to reethnify and relinguify to the powerful reward systems that surround it" (p. 88). Although Chew used Singapore as her primary example in making this argument, I believe there is definitely the potential for this same phenomenon to occur in Taiwan, since the Taiwanese do view themselves as being extremely vulnerable, both politically and economically.

2.2 Bilingualism

Attempts at providing a definition for bilingualism have, over the years, produced drastically varying characterizations in which the crucial difference is one of degree. Specifically, what degree of proficiency in each of the two languages a person speaks must be achieved before this person can be said to be bilingual? At one end of the spectrum is Bloomfield's (1933) definition – "native-like control of two languages" (p. 56), basically describing two monolinguals in the mind of one individual – a phenomenon that seldom exists in reality. The opposite extreme is Haugen's (1953) characterization of bilingualism as "the point where the speaker of one language can produce *complete, meaningful utterances* in the other language" (p.7, italics in original). As Edwards (2004) notes, with this definition, anyone capable of uttering even a single complete phrase, such as *c'est la vie*, in a foreign language would be considered bilingual. In more recent

years, scholars have come to recognize that neither of these approaches is satisfactory. The wide variety of contexts in which bilingualism and multilingualism (which I include here under the single term 'bilingualism') occur necessitates that "any meaningful discussion must be attempted within a specific context, and for specific purposes" (Edwards, 2004: 8). Matters of bilingual description, as well as assessment, are complicated further by the fact that individuals can vary drastically in their proficiency in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. "In general," states Edwards (2004), "given both the basic skills, and their subdivisions, there are at least twenty dimensions of language which could or should be assessed in order to determine bilingual proficiency" (pp. 8-9). Perhaps Baetens Beardsmore (1982) sums up the issue of description best in his assertion that "bilingualism as a term has open-ended semantics" (p. 1).

In the title of this dissertation, I refer to this study's participants as "Proficient Taiwanese English Users." This characterization of their English use as "proficient" is based on the fact that they were able to communicate effectively with me in interviews and other more casual contexts as I carried out the research for this study. In other words, I believe they proved themselves to have a high degree of communicative competence, which is defined by Nunan (2004) as "the ability to deploy linguistic, interpersonal, and sociocultural knowledge effectively for communication purposes" (p. 212). Test scores do provide further evidence of their English proficiency. At their college, all students are required to regularly take the College Students' English Proficiency Test (CSEPT). This norm-

referenced exam was specifically designed to measure the progress of Taiwanese college and university students, and each of my participants were required to achieve a score of 260 (out of a possible 360) on this test in order to graduate. All of them had scores well over 300. In the initial written questionnaire phase of the study, participants were also asked to rate their own proficiency in all the languages in their linguistic repertoires (their linguistic abilities⁶), which I think is appropriate for an identity study since their own perceived competency (or lack thereof) substantially impacts their identities.

Self-perceptions, however, are substantially influenced by the perceptions of others, and in this regard, I have found Blommaert, Collins, & Slembrouck's (2005) perspective that views multilingualism in terms of space and scale to be especially helpful. Each context, they argue, places different value judgments on particular languages, language varieties, and linguistic practices, and these hierarchical assessments of individuals' linguistic performance effect what they can and can't do, the potential value and functions of the languages in their linguistic repertoires, and consequently, their identities as well. "*Competence*," Blommaert *et al.* (2005) assert, "*is about being positioned, not about general or open-ended potential*" (p. 211, italics in original). Since English is highly valued in Taiwan and this study's participants possessed English skills superior to others in most Taiwanese spaces, value judgments of their English abilities by those with whom they shared these spaces tended to be quite high.

⁶ For the purposes of this study, I define *linguistic ability* as simply the capacity to use a language (or language variety) to express oneself and understand others.

2.3 Expertise, Affiliation, and Inheritance

Noting that "being born into a group does not mean that you automatically speak its language well" (p. 98), Rampton (1990) not only points out the inadequacies of the 'native/non-native speaker' dichotomy, but also goes one step further, suggesting alternative concepts that allow us to address the separate issues of linguistic ability and language loyalty. While linguistic ability certainly can impact language loyalty, and vice versa, the two concepts are by no means one and the same. To account for these two distinct notions, Rampton proposes the terms *language expertise* and *language allegiance*, with two aspects of *allegiance*, *affiliation* and *inheritance*, serving to further distinguish the actual relationships people have with the languages they use. Viewing social identification with particular languages in terms of *affiliation* and *inheritance*, Rampton argues, allows us to more clearly identify real issues, rather than have them clouded by the assumptions associated with the terms 'native speaker' and *mother tongue*. "It's not hard," Rampton (1990) reminds us, "to think of governments which talk about reward according to expertise ('equality of opportunity'), require smaller groups to relinquish their inheritances, but then only concede them affiliate status" (pp. 100-101). He also stresses that, just as it is not uncommon to feel a much stronger emotional bond to a spouse or love partner than with one's parents, linguistic affiliations have the potential to be much more powerful than inheritances.

Applying the notions of *expertise*, *affiliation*, and *inheritance* in his own subsequent work, Rampton and his colleagues (Leung, Harris, & Rampton, 1997) examine relationships British adolescents of South Asian descent have with English and their various "community" languages, such as Gujarati and Hindi, and point out that in a large number of cases, these students have neither a close affiliation nor a high level of expertise with the languages they have supposedly inherited. These same students, however, frequently displayed much higher levels of affiliation and expertise with English and sometimes other languages learned in school, such as German, for which no inheritance could be claimed. Leung, Harris, & Rampton call attention to the fact that much classroom practice continues to be informed by the mistaken assumption that a student's relationship with his or her home/community language is automatically one of expertise, affiliation, *and* inheritance, an assumption that contrasts sharply with many students' lived realities.

2.4 Investment

Employing Bourdieu & Passeron's (1977) economic metaphor of "cultural capital," Norton Pierce (1995) first formulated the investment concept in response to the inability of SLA theory's traditional notion of *motivation* to account for the fluctuating and often contradictory efforts of language learners in her study. Whereas *motivation* treats desire to learn a language in the same manner as it does gender and age, as a static trait assigned to learners, Norton's investment concept acknowledges that language learning is always situated in specific social contexts

which directly influence the nature and amount of effort expended. As learners invest their emotions, time, and energies in a community of speakers, its language, and its cultural norms, they do so in the hopes that the payoff will increase their "cultural capital" in the community. Following Bourdieu (1977) and Bourdieu & Passeron (1977), Norton Pierce (1995) conceptualizes "cultural capital" as encompassing both the extent to which language learners believe themselves to have valid contributions to make to a community and the extent to which they believe their contributions to be valued by other members of the community. An increase in this "cultural capital" can, in turn, increase the level of community participation, further cultivating the learner's sense of identity, strengthening affiliations, and ultimately (optimally) bringing about a sense of ownership in the language.

While Norton Pierce (1995) characterizes *investment* as emotions, effort, and time invested in the language itself, subsequent studies utilizing the *investment* concept have conceptualized their participants as investing in particular identities as community members, with language affiliation and/or expertise being a by-product of this investment. In her study of students' use of Spanish in a dual immersion classroom, Potowski (2004), for example, characterizes students as investing not only in identities as Spanish speakers, but also in identities as good students, and identities as smart or funny classmates, and Ibrahim (1999) characterizes his continental African study participants as investing in African American hip-hop identities. In this study, I utilize conceptualizations of investment in languages *and* communities, for participants' investments were

sometimes best characterized as direct ones in the language itself, and in other instances, investments in identities as members of specific communities⁷.

2.5 Communities

Although the notion of *speech communities*, groups of people who share norms of interaction (Gumperz, 1971; Labov, 1972), is not at all new to sociolinguistics, it has only been in more recent years that new theoretical conceptualizations of communities have been formulated that can account for the relationship between individuals' identity construction and the multiple social contexts in which they interact (or wish to interact). I will here discuss three interrelated conceptualizations of *communities*: *Communities of Practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), *Discourse Communities* (Gee, 1996), and *Imagined Communities* (Anderson, 1991; Kanno & Norton, 2003, Norton, 2000).

2.5.1 Communities of Practice

Perhaps the most concise definition for *communities of practice* comes from one of the scholars who coined the term, Etienne Wenger (n.d.), whose personal website provides the following definition: "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly." After examining various apprenticeship situations, such as those of meat cutters and Yucatan midwives, Lave & Wenger (1991) find that these learning situations do not reflect the traditional student/master apprenticeship

⁷ To avoid the wordiness of repeatedly writing "investment in an identity as a member of *x* community," I will henceforth refer to such investment as "investment in *x* community."

model, but instead a more complex environment where individuals with varying levels of experience all serve as conveyors of knowledge. This insight informs their situated learning theory, in which communities of practice serve as the specific contexts that such learning, linguistic and otherwise, takes place.

Central to the notion of community of practice (henceforth referred to as *CoP*) and situated learning is *legitimate peripheral participation*, a process in which a newcomer to a particular CoP "engages by simultaneously performing in several roles – status subordinate, learning practitioner, sole responsible agent in minor parts of the performance, aspiring expert, and so forth – each implying a different sort of responsibility, a different set of relations, and a different interactive involvement" (Hanks, 1991, p. 23). It is through this process that newcomers gradually acquire proficiency with the specific cultural tools of a given community that qualify them as "expert" or "core" participants in that community.

The CoP framework has proven to be very useful in language and identity studies. Bucholtz (1999), Eckert (2000), and Mendoza-Denton (1997) all make exemplary use of the concept in their studies of how linguistic variation among different groups of teenagers is related to their community participation in and out of school. Meyerhoff (2002) points out that several other studies, such as Rampton's (1995) examination of language 'crossing,' have been "conducted with a sensibility close to that underlying the CofP even if the researchers do not themselves invoke the term CofP" (p. 538). Another study that never actually mentions CoP per se, but nevertheless showcases communities engaged in a shared endeavor is McMahonill's (1997) case study of two feminist English classes

in Japan. McMahonill describes these classes, which combine feminist and language learning goals, as “communities of resistance” (p. 612) and examines the impact of the classes on its members’ evolving feminist identities. Studies such as McMahonill’s that focus on identity issues in foreign language learning contexts are actually quite rare. Block (2007) blames this neglect on the fact that learners in such contexts are perceived to have little involvement with communities in which the target language is used outside their classroom environments. I believe, however, that this perception is not necessarily an accurate one and hope that this study will play a part in helping to remedy this neglect.

2.5.2 Discourse Communities

The CoP concept is rather restrictive, requiring that participants be engaged in a “jointly negotiated enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). For many of the communities in which this study’s participants interacted, engagement did not necessarily revolve around an identifiable shared enterprise and, for such cases, Gee’s (1996) notion of *Discourse communities* offers a useful alternative community conceptualization. Expanding the *discourse* concept well beyond its usual spoken language sense, Gee (1996) defines *Discourse* (with a capital D) broadly as:

a socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic expressions, and "artefacts", of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member

of a socially meaningful group or "social network", or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful "role" (p. 131).

Gee explains that each individual has a variety of Discourses at their disposal. Every community that a person participates in has its own corresponding Discourse that is valued over others and regarded as a mark of membership. Like CoPs, Discourse communities serve as sites of identity negotiation as participants engage in long-term apprenticeships in various Discourses.

Online communities represent one sort of community for which the Discourse community concept might be more appropriate than the CoP framework. These communities, which form from participation in internet chat rooms and social networking websites, are coming to play an increasingly important role in the social lives of their members, and while it may be difficult to identify a shared enterprise among members, these communities do decidedly have their own Discourses, or ways of being and using language online. These include "using abbreviation, ellipsis, and a telegraphic style to simulate the speed and informality of oral conversation" (Lam, 2000, p. 464). Block (2007) identifies participation in such communities as a particularly promising area for the study of identity and language learning, citing one study by Lam (2004) as a prime example of this sort of research. In this study, Lam examines the influence of an online English/Cantonese bilingual chat board on the evolving identities of two teenage girls who had recently immigrated to California from China, and discovered that through participation in this online community using English peppered with pragmatic particles from Cantonese, the girls were able to construct new identities

that served to increase confidence and fluency in their face-to-face interactions as well.

2.5.3 Imagined Communities

Since it is not only concrete here and now social experiences that affect an individual's affiliation and identity, but additionally that person's hopes and dreams for the future, *imagined communities* present yet another conceptualization of community that is highly relevant to this study. The term *imagined communities* was originally coined by Anderson (1991) to describe the way in which citizens of nations conceptualize a national community. Such a community can only be described as imaginary, Anderson argues, "because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (p. 6). More recently, however, the interpretation of *imagined communities* has shifted somewhat to not only include the imagining of people and communities that actually do exist *in the present*, but also the imagining of social relationships in communities that might exist *in the future*. With the notion of *imagined communities*, identity researchers now have an appropriate theoretical construct in which to explore the link between identity and desire – our hopes and dreams for the future that undeniably impact our actions and perceptions of ourselves while we are still very much grounded in the present. Commenting on the communities that different L2 users envisioned for themselves in their own separate studies (Norton, 2001 and Kanno, 2003), Kanno

& Norton (2003), for instance, assert that "these images profoundly affected the learners' investment in the target language and their concomitant actions and learning trajectories" (p. 243).

Attempting to explain what motivates the legion of English learners in EFL contexts, Ryan (2006) takes the imagined community concept one step further, proposing that it is a sense of membership in an imagined global community of English speakers that compels many EFL learners to expend considerable efforts learning the language. Joining other scholars quoted earlier in this chapter, Ryan contends that for young people in much of the world today, the English language is increasingly associated not with any particular geographic area or culture, but instead with an international global culture and community – one in which, as citizens of the world, they are already legitimate members. Acting as "the essential regulatory mechanism at the heart of an individual's interaction with an imaginary language community" (Ryan, 2006: 41) is Dörnyei's (2005) concept of the 'Ideal L2 Self'. Drawn from Higgins' (1987) 'self-discrepancy' theory that characterizes individuals as constantly striving to reduce the discrepancies that exist between who they actually are in the present and the self that they ideally wish to be or believe they ought to be in the future, it is this notion of the 'Ideal L2 Self' that, according to Ryan, allows many learners in EFL contexts to envision themselves actively participating in an imaginary global community of English users, thereby achieving recognition of their legitimacy as members of this community.

2.6 Enterprise Culture and the Entrepreneurial Self

In the early 1980's, Margaret Thatcher's government was quick to pick up on the new capitalism concepts that were taking hold in management circles at the time, seizing upon these ideas and promoting them as an antidote to the welfare state that they believed the U.K. had become. Du Gay (1996) describes the Thatcher government's view as follows:

Basically, the government argued that the permissive and anti-enterprise culture that had been fostered by social democratic institutions since 1945 had become one of the most serious obstacles to reversing decline. The economic and moral regeneration of Britain therefore necessitated exerting pressure on every institution to make it supportive of enterprise (p. 56).

This pressure exerted "on every institution to make it supportive of enterprise" amounted to large-scale privatization and incessant political rhetoric that presented the government's vision in terms of a cultural shift from a culture of dependency to one of enterprise in which self-reliance and a host of other qualities normally associated with the entrepreneur launching a new business, such as the readiness to boldly accept risk and take responsibility for one's own choices, were valorized. This new enterprise culture was not simply a rationalization for government policies, but was instead aimed at affecting all domains of society. As Peters (2000) remarks:

The notion of enterprise culture...can be seen in poststructural terms as the creation of a new metanarrative, a totalizing and unifying story about the prospect of economic growth and development based on the triumvirate of

science, technology, and education...The new neo-liberal metanarrative is based on a vision of the future: one sustained by 'excellence,' by 'technological literacy,' by 'skills training,' by 'performance,' and by 'enterprise' (pp. 65-66).

Here we have attempts "to create new kinds of people" (Gee *et al.*, 1996: 22) – the sort of people who are continuously seeking to upgrade their skills, better their performance, and strive for nothing short of excellence, all in a quest for personal fulfillment. Such behavior is increasingly characterized as evidence of an individual's entrepreneurial self, which is considered to be driving the 'enterprising' individual to "'add value' in every sphere of existence" (du Gay, 1996: 65).

The continuous quest for self-improvement is portrayed in enterprise culture discourse as providing individuals with the flexibility that will enable them to handle a wide variety of jobs with ease, making them prized workplace commodities (Cameron, 2000, Gee *et al.*, 1996). Framing flexibility in this manner, however, obscures the fact that a highly flexible workforce ultimately eliminates job security. As Urciuoli (2008) points out, "The more replaceable the labor, the more 'flexible' it should be" (p. 219). Also obscured in enterprise culture discourse, according to Abelmann, Park, & Kim (2009), are structural factors, such as class, gender, and university ranking, that continue to impact individuals' success. They argue that with the emphasis placed on self-reliance and taking personal responsibility for one's own predicaments, individuals come

to believe that “their education and future is the outcome of individual choices free from any structural constraints” (p. 243).

In enterprise culture discourse, "the relations between production, consumption, between the 'inside' and 'outside' of the corporation, and, crucially, between work and non-work based identities, are progressively blurred" (du Gay, 1996: 65).

One's life inside and outside the workplace are considered to basically be extensions of each other and it has even been observed that job interviewees who highlight the connections between their work and non-work identities, while at the same time displaying the aforementioned qualities of the entrepreneurial self, stand a better chance at securing employment than applicants that do not make such connections (Scheuer, 2001). As Miller & Rose (1990) note, "For the entrepreneurial self, work is no longer necessarily a constraint upon the freedom of the individual to fulfil his or her potential through strivings for autonomy, creativity and responsibility. Work is an essential element in the path to self-realization" (p. 27). Thus, the idealized enterprise culture worker is one who continuously invests in a project of self-development and embraces work as an opportunity for further investment in this ongoing project.

In her discussion of the entrepreneurial perspective of language competence, Kramsch (2007) points out that a classroom focus on interactional practices valued in enterprise culture, such as collaborative group work, initiating questions, taking part in debate, and contributing ideas can be very beneficial for preparing students for enterprise culture workplaces. Kramsch (2007) also notes that

formulaic phrases like *exploring options*, *picking up challenges*,

grasping opportunities, showing support, and building consensus are all characteristic of an entrepreneurial culture, but they are often used nowadays to give an impression of choice, initiative, opportunity, support and consensus, rather than to create real choice or discussion or challenges and opportunities. They're euphemisms, intended to conceal real relations of power and control (p. 65).

Wee (2008) suggests the explicit teaching of such formulaic euphemisms with an emphasis placed on the way these expressions actually function in discourse. He goes on to argue that

ELT can help learners by providing opportunities for them to 'recontextualize' (Scheuer, 2001) the use of formulaic phrases in different situations but each time emphasizing the need to construct themselves as in possession of those qualities (such as initiative, choice and support) that are valued in enterprise culture (p. 267).

Responding to possible concerns that such pedagogical practices would require learners to present themselves in a way that lacked authenticity, Wee argues that for anyone, the practices and qualities valued in enterprise culture are learned, and that presentation of entrepreneurial qualities in the classroom "enables [learners] to start seeing themselves as having initiative, being motivated, etc, or at the very least, as wanting to be individuals with such qualities" (p. 267).

Chapter 3

The Taiwanese Context

Taiwan has had a long and tumultuous history of outside languages being forcibly imposed on its people. It was this long history of language imposition and other forms of political control that then president Lee Teng-hui was referring to when he lamented, "[The Taiwanese people's] lives are influenced by history. I think the most miserable people are Taiwanese, who have always tried in vain to get their heads above water" (April 14, 1994, quoted in Hsiao, 1997). This misery in the collective consciousness of the Taiwanese people is, as Lee stated, a direct result of a history in which they were repeatedly the unwitting pawns of political forces outside their control – a history in which the positioning of languages against each other for specific political purposes was a frequent and re-occurring theme, first with the forced imposition of Japanese during Taiwan's fifty year period of Japanese colonization, immediately followed by the equally repressive language policy promoting Mandarin monolingualism by the Chinese nationalist KMT government after the island's Chinese repatriation in 1945. Any discussion of language in present day Taiwan cannot, I believe, be properly understood without taking this bitter and complex history into account.

3.1 The Emergence of a Taiwanese Group Identity

A group consciousness had begun to emerge in the Taiwanese groups (speakers of Tai-yu⁸, Hakka, and aboriginal languages) during the period of Japanese occupation and this was further solidified under KMT rule as these groups collectively positioned the Mainlanders that arrived after Chinese repatriation in 1945 as the 'other,' with a few key differences between the two new categorizations of Taiwanese and Mainlander constantly highlighted (Wei, 2008). While the local people saw themselves as Taiwanese, Mainlanders generally considered themselves to be Chinese, and as Tse (2000) points out, "Mainlanders did not share the older group identity characterized by the sense of bitterness and misery of the past" (p. 158). Mainlanders also tended to advocate eventual unification with China, while "most local people had long ago realised how unrealistic and wishful such a policy was" (Tsao, 1999: 366). All these identity and ideological differences between the two groups made the development of any sort of group identity virtually impossible throughout much of the period of KMT rule.

⁸ I use the term Tai-yu (literally "Taiwan language" in Mandarin Chinese) to refer specifically to the language that, in Taiwan, evolved from the Southern Min that Chinese immigrants from Fujian province brought with them in the 17th and 18th centuries. Besides Southern Min (Tsao, 1999), this language spoken in Fujian province is also referred to by a variety of other names, including Hokkien (Heylen, 2005). Because the language, as it is spoken now in Taiwan, contains loanwords from Japanese and is distinct from the Southern Min, or Hokkein, spoken in Fujian and other places like Singapore, I use the term Tai-yu (following Hsiao, 1997 and Wei, 2008) to distinguish the particular variety spoken in Taiwan. The term "Taiwanese" is also frequently used to refer to the same Taiwan variant of Southern Min, but this could cause confusion, since I use "Taiwanese" to refer to Taiwan's people, only some of whom speak this language. Some participants, however, do use the term "Taiwanese" in their narratives to refer to the language and frequently allude to the fact that they do not consider Tai-yu to be Chinese. They are, of course, well aware of Tai-yu's Chinese origins, but tend to conceptualize Tai-yu as distinctly local in contrast to the Mandarin Chinese language imposed on them by Chinese Mainlanders.

A number of developments that actually started in the 1970's, however, did contribute to a new Taiwan group identity beginning to take shape. Firstly, a series of diplomatic setbacks in the 1970's, beginning with the United Nations shifting formal recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC), followed by the United States and other countries doing the same – resulted in a collective feeling of being ostracized from the international community (Tsao, 1999; Wei, 2008). Chiang Ching-kuo, who became ROC president after his father, Chiang Kai-shek, died in 1974, also contributed to a new group identity with gradual reforms that began with his "'Taiwanization' of the KMT" (Hsiau, 2000: 104) – recruiting local Taiwanese for high-ranking government positions that had previously been reserved only for Mainlanders. Other moves by Chiang Ching-kuo included removing restrictions on television broadcasts in languages other than Mandarin and prohibiting schools from punishing children for using languages other than Mandarin (P. Chen, 2001). In 1987, He also lifted the martial law that had been in effect since 1947, clearing the way for new political parties, most notably the newly-formed independence-minded Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), to challenge the KMT in future elections.

Unprecedented economic prosperity and the PRC's 1996 attempt to influence the outcome of the island's first democratic presidential election by firing missiles across the Taiwan Strait also contributed to a change in mindset among the people of Taiwan (Tsao, 1999; Tse, 2000). As Tse (2000) states, "It was against this background of diplomatic setback, of amazing economic growth, of the

liberalization of society, of the democratization of politics, and of saber rattling from the Mainland that a new sense of group identity gradually emerged" (p. 159).

Lee Teng-hui and other KMT politicians have, in this new era of democratized Taiwan politics, contributed a great deal to the emergence of a new group identity. In a 1995 speech, Lee coined the term "New Taiwanese," explaining that "for him it meant 'abandoning divisions based on who arrived first or later'...and stressing instead 'the love of Taiwan' and the 'efforts made for Taiwan'" (Wei, 2008: 64). Current Taiwan president Ma Ying-jeou, in his 1998 campaign as the KMT candidate for the office of Taipei mayor, referred to himself as "New Taiwanese" (Wei, 2008) and has, despite his Mainlander family background, made a concerted effort to learn Tai-yu and use it strategically on the campaign trail (Hsiao, 1997). Such efforts and the concept of the "New Taiwanese" represent a dramatic change from the divisive identity politics of the old KMT.

3.2 Discourses of English in Taiwan

In Taiwan, the term 'foreign language' has long been synonymous with English. English has been taught in the island's junior and senior high schools since the 1945 repatriation to the ROC government, and in 1968, English became the only required foreign language in junior high schools, with official documents listing the characters for 'foreign language' followed by 'English' in parentheses (S.C. Chen, 2003). Since 1993, senior high school students have been offered other foreign languages that they can study in lieu of English, such as Japanese, French,

and German (S.C. Chen, 2003), but English is by no means suffering any drop in popularity in Taiwan.

In 2001, Taiwan's English-in-education policy was revised, making English instruction mandatory for all fifth grade public school students nationwide. To explain their motivations for enacting this change in policy, the Ministry of Education provided the following reasons:

1. to develop in students an international perspective;
2. to maximize students' critical period of language acquisition in language learning;
3. to optimize the timing of the implementation of the new nine-year integrated curriculum; and
4. to follow the trends of the new era and to fulfil parents' expectations

(MOE, 1998a, cited in Lin, 2006: 816-817)

Tsao (2008) notes that by including the bit about fulfilling parents' expectations, the MOE is making a point to publicly announce that the public's expectations are indeed taken into account in the formulation of educational policy. Such expectations, in fact, proved to be especially influential, for the policy was again changed just two years later, largely due to pressure from students' parents (Tsao, 2008) – this time mandating that English instruction start at the third grade beginning with the 2005 school year, with a minimum of one class period of instruction per week. Since this policy stipulated only the minimum requirement, local governments were free to start English instruction at even lower grade levels and dedicate even more classroom hours to English if they saw fit to do so. And

indeed they did. The governments in several areas, such as Taipei city, Hsinchu county, and Taichung county, chose to start English instruction in the first grade, and others like Taipei city and Tainan city devoted two class periods to English each week instead of just one (Tsao, 2008). This seemingly overzealous push to start English instruction at a younger and younger age, often at the insistence of parents, illustrates the importance placed on learning the English language in Taiwan today.

In response to critics who questioned the wisdom of teaching English to very young children before they had even acquired a firm knowledge of their 'mother tongues,' Taipei officials argued that developing English proficiency early was essential for promoting Taiwan internationally and increasing the nation's competitiveness on the world stage (Huang, 2006). Such arguments are not at all new. Taiwanese officials have, since the 1990's, been promoting English for the purpose of transforming Taiwan into an Asia-Pacific business center (Tsao, 2008). Intense internationalization, the government rhetoric maintained, was of paramount importance for Taiwan's prosperity and stability in the face of aggression from mainland China (S.C. Chen, 2003). Tsao (2008) points out that another reason for the Taiwan government's intense focus on internationalization that is generally not explicitly mentioned in official discourse is the desire to make the nation highly visible internationally in order to compensate for its ambiguous political status. He goes on to explain that "most people, seeing neither a China-centered state nor a Taiwan independent state as viable, tend to focus their attention on the economic opportunity offered by English. Therefore,

they have an extraordinarily high expectation for their children's English ability" (p. 296).

Explicitly reiterating this rhetoric that had already been circulating for quite a few years was the *Challenge 2008 National Development Plan (2002-2007)*, a six-year strategic development plan released by the Government Information Office in May of 2002. This plan identifies four areas for substantial investment (an estimated expenditure of approximately U.S. \$75 billion) – "cultivating talent; research, development, and innovation; international logistics; and a high-quality living environment" (Government Information Office, 2002) – and then lists ten specific sub-plans detailing the benefits of these investments. These ten sub-plans all reiterate the discourse of competitiveness, and increased competition from Mainland China and Southeast Asia is repeatedly mentioned throughout the document. All ten sub-plans also relate, in one way or another, to the goal of transforming Taiwan into an Asia-Pacific business center (Government Information Office, 2002).

The strategy in this national development plan that explicitly emphasizes the importance of English in the realization of national goals is Sub-plan (1) – "Cultivate Talent for the E-generation." The English summary of the plan states:

To meet the future challenges of globalization and internationalization, the ROC should first enhance the abilities of its people. Concurrently, the government will establish an environment for international learning. This project emphasizes the ability to master foreign languages, especially English, and the use of Internet. Since English is the language that links

the world, the government should designate English as a quasi-official language and expand the use of English as a part of daily life (Government Information Office, 2002).

Not only does this report make the unprecedented call for English to be recognized as a "quasi-official language," but it also asks for the use of English to be expanded into domains of life that have historically been the preserve of Mandarin, highlighting the lengths the Taiwan government is willing to go to maintain a competitive edge internationally, and the importance placed on English in achieving this goal. Efforts to "establish an environment for international learning" are now well underway, with the government actively encouraging tertiary institutions to offer programs and courses in which English is the medium of instruction so as to attract international students.

Aspects of enterprise culture are also prominently represented in this development plan. In keeping with enterprise culture's emphasis on the continuous pursuit of excellence and upgrading of skills, it argues that "since it is necessary for the entire society to enter the new era with the e-generation, we must make concerted efforts to establish a comprehensive life-long learning system...to immerse ourselves in cultural, social transformation, and reconstruction" (Government Information Office, 2002). All members of Taiwanese society are basically urged to take personal responsibility for their own life-long self-development and attempt to become the idealized neo-liberal subjects celebrated in enterprise culture discourse. And just as Abelmann *et al.*

(2009) contend is the case in South Korea, in Taiwan as well, “At the heart of this personal development project is English mastery” (p. 230)⁹.

The 2002 national development plan illustrates the view, prevalent among Taiwan officials and policymakers, that English is the panacea for all of the nation's globalization and internationalization challenges. As Tsao (2008) states, "By the turn of the century, in the minds of most government officials and the general public, there was a virtual consensus that the first step in internationalizing Taiwan was to increase its citizens' English proficiency" (p. 291). Pushing for a greater emphasis to be placed on English is a safe move for government officials and politicians in Taiwan. To start with, there is widespread public support for the promotion of English. S.C. Chen (2003), for example, comments that "anyone who has opposed the teaching of English in elementary schools has been regarded as old-fashioned and lacking a modern or international perspective" (p.162). According to Huang (2006), the ability to begin English education for elementary school children as early as possible has actually become a sort of competition in which city and county governments seek to score political points for such use of resources.

Since it is not encumbered with the many hot button associations that other languages are in the Taiwan linguistic landscape, English is also perceived as being neutral¹⁰. As Wei (2008) explains:

⁹ Abelmann *et al.* (2009) also point out that taking personal responsibility for one's own development is especially appealing to individuals in countries like South Korea and Taiwan that have only recently democratized. As they explain, in such countries, “the discourse of self-development is all the more easily celebrated because of the ironic historical conjuncture between neo-liberal and post-authoritarian/collective liberal transformations” (p. 243).

...opting for English in place of Mandarin or other linguistic varieties such as Hakka, Tai-yu, or the aboriginal languages is a deliberate way to avoid another ethnolinguistic conflict, the one in which Mandarin is identified with the political regime in Beijing, Tai-yu with independence, and Hakka or the aboriginal languages with separatism (p. 87).

3.3 Studies of English Use and Attitudes about English in Taiwan

To date, almost all of the research relating to English in Taiwan has been devoted to teaching methods. Although studies focusing on methodology, such as the ones Tse (1987) describes, have undoubtedly been beneficial for English teaching practice in Taiwan, this exclusive focus on methods, according to S.C. Chen (2003), "has undermined other issues and problems of English language usage" (p. 68). There have, however, been three studies (S.C. Chen, 2003; Huang, 2006; Ke, 2009) that do examine the use of and attitudes toward English in Taiwan.

One of these studies is actually a series of separate investigations that S.C. Chen (2003) herself conducted, in which she seeks to uncover the "motivations for the spread of English in Taiwan" (p. 8), by examining patterns of English use

¹⁰ English, in reality, is far from neutral. English is indeed, as Dua (1994, cited in Pennycook, 2003:59) asserts, "ideologically encumbered." In comparison to other languages spoken in Taiwan, however, English does not have the same potential to incite conflict. Of course it is not unusual for language planners and language policy makers to regard English as a neutral language relative to local ethnically associated languages, and opt for English as an official lingua franca with the aim of conflict avoidance. Wei (2008) specifically points to Singapore as an example of a country that has instituted such a policy, but notes that "unlike Singapore, increasingly democratized Taiwan does not associate English with lower standards of morality or with decadence, especially compared with the influence of Chinese" (p. 88).

and attitudes toward English – issues she claims had been completely ignored prior to her research. In the first of these investigations, S.C. Chen (2003), using the sociology of language as her theoretical framework, attempts to measure the spread of English in Taiwan in terms of geography, demography, and functionality, through surveys and interviews, concluding that "urbanization and generational factors have greatly affected the frequency of English use for all four functional skills" (p. 100). Participants in urban Taipei utilized all four functional skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) in English more than their rural counterparts in Hualien. Participants in the younger generation group utilized reading and listening skills more often than the older generation group, but the older generation group used speaking and writing skills slightly more often. Reading was found to be the skill employed most often, with listening, speaking, and writing placing second, third, and fourth.

Another of S.C. Chen's (2003) studies was a quantitative survey study examining both English usage and attitudes toward English in relation to Mandarin, Tai-yu, Hakka, and aboriginal languages. She concludes from the results of this survey that "although English still functions as supplementary to the core language in the linguistic repertoire of most Taiwanese, it has encroached on every domain in which Mandarin or Taiwanese [languages] are traditionally used" (p. 200). Her results also indicate that participants evaluated English much more favorably than Taiwanese languages, both in terms of instrumentality and communicative functionality, associating English with upward mobility and international communication.

These ambitious large-scale studies by S.C. Chen (2003) were undertaken with the central concerns of exploring the reasons for the spread of English throughout Taiwan society and measuring the extent that this spread has actually occurred. Such a research focus requires a macro-oriented approach that is very different than the one that I employ in this study, which is much more similar to the one Huang (2006) conducted in which she sought to "connect the macro with the micro, that is, to relate global and national forces as well as societal and cultural dynamics to students' lives and learning" (p. 33).

The theoretical framework Huang (2006) employed for her qualitative multi-case study is one she calls a "socio-ideological theory of language and literacy," which draws from work in the New Literacy Studies framework – namely Street's (1984) ideological model of literacy and Barton & Hamilton's (1998) social theory of literacy. Using semi-structured interviews with four Taiwanese university and college students as her primary source of data, Huang (2006) attempts to gain an understanding of these students' English-as-a-foreign-language discourses, their identities, and how they actually use English in their lives, as well as how they understand and relate to the English-as-a-foreign-language discourse of the Taiwanese government. She found that although her four study participants had a diverse range of experiences learning and using English, they had all constructed identities for themselves that clearly reflected the government's English-as-a-foreign-language discourse of internationalization and competitiveness. These were identities as upwardly mobile international intellectuals who are also members of a global community of English speakers.

Ke's (2009) study also examined Taiwanese university students' use and conceptualizations of English. From interviews with his study participants, nineteen students with various majors at the same university in northern Taiwan, Ke determined that they all "perceived English as a surviving tool" (p. 81) and most associated English strongly with the people and cultures of Anglo-American countries. The only exceptions were two students who had participated in international volunteer projects and had more experience than their peers using English to communicate with other 'non-native' speakers. Referring to these two participants, Ke reports, "Only students who had used English in lingua franca situations showed some awareness of global English ideas" (p. 97).

3.4 The Taiwanese Educational System

Before describing the micro-context of this study – the college that all my participants attended, a brief survey of the larger context of the Taiwanese educational system is in order.

Most Taiwanese children attend private pre-schools for two years before beginning their compulsory education – six years of primary school and three years of junior high school. Throughout these nine years of schooling, languages account for 20 – 30% of the curricula. In addition to Mandarin Chinese and English (from at least the third grade), studying a Taiwanese language (Tai-yu, Hakka, or an aboriginal language) is required from the first grade to the sixth grade (Government Information Office, 2010). In their final year of junior high school, all students take the Basic Competency Test, which covers the subjects of

Chinese, English, social science, natural science, and mathematics. Scores on this test determine which secondary schools students can attend¹¹. There are three basic types of secondary institutions: three-year senior high schools, three-year senior vocational schools, and five-year junior colleges.

Three-year senior high schools offer instruction geared specifically toward preparing students for tertiary-level entrance exams. These examinations always have an English section, so English courses are featured prominently in senior high school curriculae. Since the exams tend to focus on grammar, word usage, and reading comprehension, high school English instruction primarily emphasizes vocabulary, translation, and grammar explanation (Kao, 2002)¹². Senior high school graduates continue their studies at either four-year colleges and universities, two-year junior colleges, or four-year institutes of technology.

Three-year senior vocational schools aim to provide students with skills they can, upon graduation, immediately put to use in specific professions, such as agriculture, business, or nursing¹³. 30% of class time at these institutes is devoted to general subjects, such as Chinese, English, science, and math, while 60% is

¹¹ For admittance to many senior high schools, students are required to pass additional entrance examinations designed and administered by the individual schools. In January 2011, however, Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou announced plans for a 12-year compulsory education system. Presently, secondary education in Taiwan is not free (but private institutions are considerably more expensive than public ones). Under this proposed plan scheduled to be in place by 2014, the government would shoulder all the costs of secondary education except for some minimal miscellaneous fees, and only institutions with “distinctive features” would be allowed administer entrance examinations (Focus Taiwan News Channel, 2011, January).

¹² Wang (2008), however, expresses the belief that an increasing number of junior and senior high school teachers in Taiwan are embracing communicative language teaching methods and this traditional emphasis on grammar and translation is not quite so omnipresent as it once was.

¹³ In recent years, distinctions between senior high schools and senior vocational schools have become increasingly blurred, with senior high schools offering some vocational courses and senior vocational schools offering more academic courses. In 1996, several schools dubbed *dual-stream high schools* that offer a combination of academic and vocational skills courses were also established (Ministry of Education, 2010).

devoted to students' areas of specialization. Elective courses and group activities account for the remaining 10% (Department of Technology and Vocational Education, n.d.). Graduates of three-year vocational schools who do not immediately enter the workforce go on to attend four-year colleges and universities, two-year junior colleges, and four-year institutes of technology¹⁴.

In Taiwan's five-year junior college programs, the first three years are the equivalent of senior vocational school with much of the instruction focusing on particular specialties, and the final two years equivalent to Taiwan's two-year junior colleges, which are very similar to community college courses of study in the United States. Graduates of five-year junior colleges are awarded a junior college diploma (equivalent to an Associate's degree). Those who do not immediately enter the workforce¹⁵ can continue their studies in two-year programs at institutes of technology or transfer to four-year colleges and universities (Department of Technology and Vocational Education, n.d.).

Institutes of technology are tertiary-level institutions that focus on particular specialties, such as business or engineering. Those that offer graduate-level degrees are considered universities and those that don't are referred to as technical colleges. In addition to their four-year programs, most institutes of technology offer two-year programs designed specifically for graduates of two and five-year junior colleges to continue their studies as juniors and seniors and obtain

¹⁴ Since senior vocational school students have not had the same level of intense exam preparation as their senior high school counterparts, these students do find it more difficult to achieve entrance exam scores high enough to attend the more prestigious universities. With Taiwan's falling birthrates and huge number of tertiary institutions, however, any student who desires a tertiary education is sure to be accepted at some school.

¹⁵ With three years of documented work experience, 5-year junior college graduates can qualify for admittance to master's degree programs at Taiwanese universities (Government Information Office, 2010)

baccalaureate degrees. Institutes of technology are not necessarily considered inferior to regular colleges and universities. Some, like National Taipei University of Technology, are national institutions that enjoy a great deal of prestige.

Admission to all of Taiwan's tertiary-level institutions involve some sort of examination¹⁶. Some simply require students to achieve a specified score on the GSAT (General Scholastic Aptitude Test – Taiwan's equivalent to the SAT), while other schools (and often individual departments) have their own entrance examinations for applicants (Government Information Office, 2010). To obtain admission to two-year college programs at institutes of technology, prospective students take entrance examinations administered by the Department of Technical and Vocational Education, and their scores on this exam determine what two-year programs they can gain admittance to. In addition to obtaining sufficiently high exam scores, some institutions have additional rounds of selection, which often include interviews.

¹⁶ It has been possible, since 2001, for senior high school students to gain admission to Taiwanese colleges and universities through recommendation from their high schools. In order to get these recommendations, however, students still need to take examinations – either exams administered by individual tertiary institutions or the Joint University Entrance Examination. Recommendations by high schools are based not only on exam scores and grades, but also participation in extra-curricular activities (Ministry of Education, 2010).

3.5 The Micro Context: Saint Agnes College¹⁷

The college that my participants all attended is in a major metropolitan area of southern Taiwan and is the only institution in the Technical and Vocational Education system that specializes in foreign languages. It was established in 1966 as a 5-year junior college, and later became a technological institute as well with two and four-year programs offering degrees in English, Japanese, French, German, Spanish, and a variety of more specialized language related majors, such as Translation and Interpretation, Foreign Language Instruction, and Chinese Applied Linguistics. In the late 1970s, its English department instituted a policy of using only English as the medium of instruction, and Saint Agnes continues to be the only English department in Taiwan to have such a policy.

In the Saint Agnes five-year college program, students can major in English, Japanese, French, Spanish, or German, and are also required to choose a minor from these same language choices. Those who score highest on the five-year program's entrance exam have priority in choosing which major and minor language concentrations they will study. Consequently, English majors are generally more academically inclined than those with other majors, since English is the most popular major, and English majors with the most popular minor language concentrations (French and Japanese) tend to be exceptionally good students. Most graduates from this program opt to continue with their education

¹⁷ *Saint Agnes College* is the pseudonym I use throughout this dissertation to refer to the college my participants attended. Saint Agnes was a Chinese Catholic from the 1800's known for her zeal for educating girls. Since the college's students are 90% female and it is a Catholic-affiliated institution, I thought this pseudonym highly appropriate. At all points in this dissertation where participants' and faculty members' quotes include the actual name of the college, I have substituted the pseudonym *Saint Agnes*.

at Saint Agnes or another college or university, transferring to the third year of the four-year program or gaining admittance to one of the two-year programs specifically designed for graduates of two and five-year junior colleges. Some graduates of the Saint Agnes five-year program, however, do immediately enter the workforce, and are well-represented as employees at area businesses.

My participants for this study were students in the five-year college who were all majoring in English and minoring in French. There were approximately 50 students in their class and this study began just a month before they graduated in June of 2009. Saint Agnes has its own way of referring to each of the classes in its five-year college program, and using this means of reference, my participants' class was E39A. *E* refers to the fact that they were English majors, *39* to the fact that they were the 39th graduating cohort, and *A* to the fact that this particular class was the one that had French as a minor (B signified Spanish, C Japanese, and D German). When I refer to this class as a group, I will hereafter use the term *E39A*.

Much like the Vietnamese college class that Kramsch & Sullivan (1996) describe, five-year college students at Saint Agnes are, for the most part, together with the same group of students for the first three years of their five-year course of study. Consequently, they quickly get to know each other very well. Each year, the different groups of students (e.g., E39A, E39B, etc.) are assigned a classroom and they stay in this same classroom throughout that year for most of their classes. Teachers with different specialties come to their classroom to conduct classes instead of the more usual situation where students go to different

classrooms for different classes (as is the case for the 4th and 5th year of the five-year college and the two and four-year college).

Along with their English-as-the-medium-of-instruction policy, the Saint Agnes English department, in the late 1970's, adopted Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methods. Both are generally considered to have been hugely successful, for Saint Agnes five-year college students, by the time they graduate, are among the most fluent English speakers in Taiwan. The English-as-the-medium-of-instruction policy and use of CLT, however, are not without their critics within the department. Some faculty members believe that although students do indeed become extremely adept at expressing themselves fluently and confidently in oral English communication, this fluency has come at the expense of grammatical accuracy. As one teacher who was himself a graduate of the Saint Agnes five-year college told me:

They can use English quite well, but on the other hand, their weakness is usually the grammar 'cause I think...in their third year, they have a grammar class...But I think that it's the only course that deals with grammar. And so their grammatical accuracy is sometimes not as good as general high school students.

Despite occasional criticism though, it is unlikely that either the use of CLT or the English as the medium of instruction policy will be changed any time soon, for as one teacher/curriculum developer explained, "It is a tradition and it is more like a reputation that the department has to keep."

I was a teacher at Saint Agnes for the 2005/2006 academic year and taught the E39A class when they were second-year students. When I first arrived at the college, before teaching a single class, an administrator who had been with Saint Agnes since its founding in the 1960's told me that there were basically two types of students there – those who were genuinely passionate about languages, and those whose parents *wanted* them to be passionate about languages. It didn't take me long to figure out which students fell into each of these two categories. E39A had very few students from the latter group, presumably because such students would have ended up in E39B or E39D (Spanish and German minors), rather than E39A, which involved the popular French minor. In any case, the E39A students greatly impressed me with their English proficiency and their seemingly genuine passion for learning languages.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In this chapter, I first discuss narrative inquiry and my choice of employing this form of qualitative research for this study, both as a method of data collection and presentation. I then outline my methodology and end the chapter by revealing a bit about my background and discussing my position as a researcher.

4.1 Narrative Inquiry

In the *Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, Schwandt (2007) defines *narrative inquiry* as “the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research” (p. 204). Narrative inquiry is indeed interdisciplinary, with avid practitioners in a wide variety of fields, such as psychology (e.g., Polkinghorne, 1988), anthropology (e.g., Bateson, 1994), nursing (e.g., Barton, 2008), and education (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have also, over the course of the last two decades, shown an increased interest in employing narrative approaches, with language learners’ stories, such as those reported in Norton-Pierce (1995) and Benson & Nunan (2005), providing a “unique source of information about learners’ motivations, experiences, struggles, losses, and gains” (Pavlenko, 2001,

p. 213). Clearly, narrative, as Riessman (2002) points out, “does not fit neatly within the boundary of any single scholarly field” (p. 217).

While storytelling is, of course, an age-old practice and narrative methods have been utilized by academics since the 1920's¹⁸, the “narrative turn” (Kreiwirth, 1992) of the 1980's was largely a result of widespread disillusionment with positivist research approaches. As Brockmeier & Harré (2001) explain, positivist philosophy “has been sharply criticized, opening up new horizons for interpretive investigations which focus on discursive and cultural *forms of life*, as opposed to a futile search for universal laws of human behavior” (p. 39, italics in original). Narrative inquiry, with its focus on the storied experiences of particular individuals, offers opportunities for researchers to be unshackled from the positivist requirement of generalizability.

Bruner (1986) argues that there are two distinct modes of reasoning – the *paradigmatic* mode, which strives to generalize through categorization, and the *narrative* mode, which “strives to put its timeless miracles into the particulars of experience, and to locate the experience in time and place” (p. 13). Bruner's distinction between the narrative and paradigmatic modes serve as a basis for Polkinghorne's (1995) division of narrative inquiry into two types – *analysis of narratives* and *narrative analysis*. In *analysis of narratives*, participants' storied experiences serve as data, and the paradigmatic mode of thinking is employed in the analysis and presentation of this narrative data. Participants' experiences are categorized, common themes are identified across multiple narratives, and the

¹⁸ See Chase (2005) for a discussion of life history narratives collected by the Chicago school of sociologists in the 1920's and 1930's, as well as anthropological studies from the 1920's that employed life history methods to document Native American tribal cultures.

focus is on the production of conceptual knowledge. This analysis is typically presented in a manner akin to a traditional positivist social science report. For *narrative analysis*, the data may or may not be in narrative form, but the texts in which researchers present their analyses are storied syntheses of their data. These storied analyses, Polkinghorne (1995) stresses, “must fit the data while at the same time bringing an order and meaningfulness that is not apparent in the data themselves” (p. 16). The principal difference between the two types of narrative inquiry is the product. *Analysis of narrative* produces abstractions, while *narrative analysis* produces explanatory stories of particular experiences.

Analysis of narrative and *narrative analysis* methods are often used together and can in fact be complementary. As Kramp (2004) points out, “An analysis of the narratives that leads you to identify the individual and shared outcomes would certainly inform and shape the plots you construct when you create your storied analyses” (p. 120). This is just the sort of approach I have taken in this study. *Analysis of narrative* methodology was employed in identifying themes in my participants’ interview data (some common to multiple participants and others unique to individual participants) prior to writing up storied *narrative analysis* chapters focusing on each participant’s particular experiences. These chapters are then followed by a cross-participant *analysis of narrative* discussion in which common themes are highlighted.

My decision to expressly elicit narrative responses from participants for my interview data and present this data in storied form stems from my belief that narrative structure – the causal linking of events with a unifying plot

(Polkinghorne, 1995) – is ideally suited for illuminating human experiences.

Narrative inquiry is, in fact, based on the assumption that humans actually understand their own experiences as stories. MacIntyre (1981) goes so far as to argue that narrative structure is very much a part of our everyday experience:

It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of narratives we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others. Stories are lived before they are told—except in the case of fiction (p. 197).

Other narrative theorists, such as Connelly & Clandinin (1990) acknowledge that life as we live it lacks the coherent plot that it gains in the telling. Many causal connections are, after all, only known in retrospect (Polkinghorne, 1995). I agree with Connelly & Clandinin (1990), however, on their point that we are all inclined to impose narrative structures on our experiences as we live them and organize these experiences in a storied form in our memories. It is the causal connections and plot imposed on experiences in the retrospective telling that serve to make autobiographic narratives much more than simply relating past experiences. Individuals attribute their own personal meanings to their experiences and connect seemingly disconnected events with the plots they apply to their stories. As Casanave (2007) points out, “It is this power of narrative to ascribe meaning to parts, and to configure them into wholes, that defines narrative as a meaning-making phenomenon” (p. 18).

By presenting my focal participants' data in storied *narrative analysis* form, I am also striving to portray these participants in a manner that truly allows the reader to get to know each of them as "a distinctive individual, in a unique situation, dealing with issues in a personal manner" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 18). Although qualitative researchers utilizing all types of presentation methods attempt to understand their participants' lived experiences from the point of view of the participants themselves, participant quotations in many studies seem to me, all too often, like collections of disembodied voices. This is what I expressly wished to avoid as I wrote up storied chapters for each of my focal participants¹⁹.

The fact that this study is primarily concerned with identity issues makes narrative inquiry especially appropriate. Identity, as concisely defined by Bucholtz & Hall (2005) is simply "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586), and personal narratives are a perfect mode for such positioning, generally providing a far better impression of who one *is* in relation to others than responses to direct questions about identity or observations of behavior. As Giddens (1991) states, "A person's identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though this is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*" (p. 54, emphasis in original). Although identities are multiple, continuously changing, and frequently contradictory, individuals seek to impose coherence on the self, and this is done, according to Giddens (1991), through the

¹⁹ A good illustration of quotations that seem like a collection of disembodied voices can actually be found right here in Chapter 10 of this dissertation, where I report data obtained in interviews with Saint Agnes faculty members. This is done in a typical *analysis of narrative* fashion, using direct quotations to help illustrate general themes and observations derived from these interviews. Storied presentations of faculty members' experiences that allowed readers also to get to know them as individuals would, of course, have been valuable, but alas, time and word-limit restrictions prohibited such a presentation.

constant editing and revision of our life narratives. Such revision is evident in this study, where my participants occasionally contradict earlier comments and revise previous interpretations to reflect their changed perspectives. For researchers working in narrative inquiry, contradictions and revisions such as these are not considered a problematic threat to the validity of a study. They are instead regarded as revealing indicators of participants' shifting identity positions. Polkinghorne (1991) explicates how narrative inquiry highlights identity development over time when he writes that "viewing the self as a narrative or story, rather than as a substance, brings to light the temporal and developmental dimension of human experience" (p. 135). Since "the temporal and developmental dimension" of my participants' experiences were a principal concern of this study, I believe narrative inquiry provided an ideal approach. As Kanno (2003) asserts, "Tapping into issues of identity – how one views oneself and relates to the world around one – requires an inquiry into people's experiences and meaning making, and an inquiry into those areas calls for the use of narrative" (p. 11).

4.2 Methodology

In the initial phase of this study, I administered a written survey to all the members of class E39A who chose to participate (23 of them). The written survey (see Appendix) asked students to rate their proficiency in each of the languages in their linguistic repertoires (separately rating each of the four skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing), report what groups of people they

routinely used each language with, provide brief descriptions of their experiences learning these languages, and report their aspirations for the near and distant future. At the end of this survey, participants were asked if they would like to volunteer to be focal participants in the study, and if so, to provide contact information so that we could arrange an interview at their convenience.

The survey questionnaires served multiple purposes. First, they allowed me to identify overall language and community affiliations for the group. They also provided an easy way for students to volunteer to be focal participants in the study. Eighteen students volunteered to be focal participants, and from these volunteers, I chose four that I thought most likely to have a sense of English ownership to be focal participants and three additional students to be stand-by participants, just in case any of the chosen focal participants left Taiwan or dropped out of the study for any reason. Finally, the short answers provided on the written survey by focal and stand-by participants served as a sort of guide for my interviews with them. Sometimes, for example, I elicited storied elaborations on the questionnaire's brief responses with questions such as "Could you tell me about speaking English with your brother?"

In these subsequent audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with the four focal and three stand-by participants, I began by eliciting narratives describing past experiences learning the various languages in their linguistic repertoires. I then moved on to narratives of the present, requesting that they reflect on their communicative interactions in the present (both face-to-face and technology mediated interactions) and describe their daily language use in as much detail as

possible along with the accompanying contexts. I also elicited specific sorts of stories from participants by asking questions such as “Can you tell me about a time when you were able to help someone by using English/French/other foreign language?” Finally, I ended interviews by eliciting narratives of the future, asking participants to envision their future interactions, both in their lives outside the workplace and in the professional realm of their future careers.

With their combination of set procedure and flexibility, semi-structured interviews, I believe, provided an ideal method for obtaining the majority of my data for this study. General pre-planned guidelines for structuring the interviews ensured that I did not omit any important areas that I wished to cover. At the same time though, participants were free to take the interviews in any direction they deemed appropriate, allowing new ideas to emerge in the course of our interactions. In short, semi-structured interviews provided an ideal mix of structure and flexibility, while at the same time empowering participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Semi-structured interviews do, of course, have some disadvantages as well. Such interviews can be quite time-consuming, producing an immense amount of data that be a daunting task to transcribe and analyze. Orchestrating semi-structured interview also requires some skill as the researcher must be able to facilitate the elicitation of useful information without asking leading questions (Oppenheim, 1992). At the beginning of this study, I admit that my interviewing skills had something to be desired, but with each interview, I believe I became more adept with semi-structured interviewing, learning to keep

my mouth shut and allow participants' stories to unfold on their own without my intervention.

After transcribing participants' interviews, I focused on organization and preliminary analysis of the mass of data that I had obtained. This involved thematic sorting – first identifying the main themes from each participant's interview and follow-up email communication, and then cutting and pasting all the data pertaining to each theme for each participant into its own Microsoft Word file. For example, I put all of Gigi's comments on *English Debate Society* in one file and her comments on *Facebook* in another file. Each participant had between 35 and 47 main themes. Some themes were common among participants while others were particular to individual participants. After these preliminary analyses had been done, I started writing up storied drafts for each participant that, for the focal participants, eventually became chapters 6-9 of this dissertation. These drafts were emailed to participants shortly before I returned to Taiwan in March of 2010. In addition to conducting follow-up interviews with participants during this trip, I also discussed with them the story drafts they had just read, giving them the opportunity to correct factual errors, comment on my analyses, and provide alternative interpretations. During this second trip to Taiwan, I also conducted interviews with Saint Agnes English department faculty members that not only provided me with data to respond to research question (4), but also gave me a far better understanding of the five-year college program than I ever had when I was actually a teacher in the department.

After analyzing the complete body of data from each of my participants (the initial and follow-up interviews, as well as relevant data from email correspondence²⁰ during the intervening months and Facebook cyber-ethnography²¹), I updated chapter drafts of each focal participant's 'story' and emailed these drafts to the participants for them to again confirm, modify, or reject the interpretations I had made. Involving participants in the data analysis like this not only helped prevent me from misrepresenting their experiences. It also allowed for the sort of empowering research advocated by Rampton (1992), which "places informants in the driving seat, with the aid of researchers reflexively constituting themselves as objects in a theory which they are partly shaping themselves" (p. 56), making the entire research process, rather than just the data collection phase of the study, a dialogue between the researcher and participants.

4.3 My Story and Position as Researcher

In addition to embracing participants' subjective interpretations of their own experiences, narrative inquiry acknowledges that the background and subjectivities of the researcher cannot help but affect the "relationship,

²⁰ Obtaining data via email offers considerable convenience for researchers and participants alike, eliminating travel costs and scheduling problems (Opdenakker, 2006). Lack of spontaneity in email interviews, however, can be viewed as an advantage or a disadvantage. On one hand, participants have adequate time to mull over questions and provide very thoughtful replies. On the other hand, however, the rich data that spontaneous responses so often provide seldom result from email interviews, and participants can easily forget to respond to questions posed in email messages (Kivits, 2005).

²¹ According to Ward (1999), *cyber-ethnography* is "where the researcher observes the interaction on a particular website in order to gain a fuller understanding of internet culture" (p. 100). Since I was a Facebook friend of each of this study's focal and stand-by participants, my participant observation on Facebook provided an additional source of data.

identifications, and exchanges” (Luttrell, 2000, p. 500) with participants.

Researchers’ own experiences, moreover, impact their presentation and analyses of participants’ narratives (Chase, 2005). It is, therefore, appropriate and in keeping with the narrative inquiry tradition for me to discuss my own background and my relationship with the participants of this study.

Growing up in an almost entirely Caucasian area of Virginia with middle class parents of mostly German ethnicity²² in the 1970’s, my childhood was fairly devoid of multiculturalism. My family and the community I grew up in could best be described as devoutly Christian and very conservative. In my adult life, I have done my best to explicitly reject the values of my upbringing. My religious views are agnostic and I generally describe myself as politically being “left of left.”

In my teens and early twenties, all my language learning was restricted to European languages. I studied French in junior high and high school, achieving some reading proficiency, but with no opportunity to use French outside the classroom, I promptly forgot all the French I ever knew after high school. Any knowledge of German that I acquired after three semesters of university study was likewise quickly forgotten. My affiliations with both of these languages were definitely quite weak. Outside the classroom, I participated in no communities where French or German were spoken and I saw these languages as having little relevance to my life.

²² Most of my ancestors immigrated from Germany approximately 200 years ago, and there were no traces of German culture in my family life. My mother lived in Germany and Austria for two years after her college graduation and did speak fairly fluent German, but was reluctant to speak German to my sister and I when we were young. She now tells me this is because she didn’t want us to pick up her accented German pronunciation.

After graduating from Virginia Commonwealth University with an art degree, I supported myself with jobs in restaurants and bars, focusing most of my attention on music. I played in several bands and started a small underground record label to release records and CDs for my own bands and those of friends²³. The record label failed to make much money for the first few years of its existence, but in 1994, our music started selling in Japan due to positive reviews in an influential Japanese music magazine. I started to receive lots of mail from Japanese fans and musicians wanting me to release their music.

The record label's success in Japan was short lived as Japanese consumers, by 1996, finally realized their bubble economy had burst and stopped spending money on frivolous things like American underground music. By this time, however, I had, through letters and email, firmly established friendships with many Japanese musicians and released music for some of them. I was quite impressed by the effort these Japanese friends exerted to communicate with me in English, and since I was not expected to make any attempt at all to use Japanese, I came to feel quite guilty about the imbalance in expended communicative energies. This monolingual guilt led me to enroll in a beginning Japanese course.

I totally embraced my Japanese study. Not only did I have friends in Japan and opportunities to use the language when I went to Japan to play shows, but in San Francisco (where I was living at the time), I also had several Japanese friends that were studying as international students at colleges and universities in the San Francisco Bay area. I became particularly close to one of these friends and we

²³ Most of the music I played and that my record label released could loosely be referred to as 'rock,' but much of it was decidedly experimental and not made with any intention of appealing to mainstream audiences.

eventually married in 2000. Throughout our courtship, I apparently impressed my future wife with my storytelling, for she repeatedly told me that my storytelling abilities would make me a good teacher. At that time, I was also coming to the realization that I would never be able to support myself entirely with music and was seeking a change careerwise. With my newfound passion for language and intercultural communication, teaching English seemed like a good choice.

In 2000, I started my TESOL studies and have since taught English in San Francisco, Guam, Hawaii, and Taiwan. In Taiwan, I taught for a year at the college I refer to in this dissertation as Saint Agnes College. I believe I was a very well-liked teacher at Saint Agnes, and my popularity there among students probably did have much to do with my storytelling and discussion of my life experiences in the classroom. I always made a point of peppering my lessons with anecdotes from my travels, experiences, and family life – particularly stories about my son, who was a toddler at the time. My students, I believe, came to feel that they really knew me as a person. Some even came to my apartment on weekends to play with my son. Just before my family left Taiwan to move to Singapore in 2006, the E39A class and S39B class (Spanish majors minoring in English) both threw me big going away parties.

It was my fascination with Singapore's sociolinguistic situation²⁴ that led me to pursue doctoral studies at National University of Singapore, and my original

²⁴ By "Singapore's sociolinguistic situation," I mean the country's co-official status of English, Mandarin Chinese, Malay, & Tamil and the spaces that each of these languages officially and unofficially inhabit in Singaporean society. For more information on multilingualism in Singapore, see Wee (2002) and Wee (2003) – two highly informative articles that served to initially pique my interest in Singapore's sociolinguistic situation and ultimately led to Lionel Wee being my supervisor for this dissertation.

intention was to focus my dissertation on issues related to language and identity in Singapore. Early in the planning stages of my research there, however, I experienced great difficulty recruiting research participants. Meanwhile, I had continued to stay in contact with some of my former Taiwanese students from E39A via email and Facebook. At one point when I was still thinking that I would focus my research on Singapore, I considered including some E39A students in my research in order to contrast the views and experiences of students in the two societies. When I emailed a few E39A students asking if they would be willing to participate in my research, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Since I was having trouble recruiting participants in Singapore, and the scope of my planned study was getting rather large and unweildy, I subsequently decided to focus my research entirely on my former students in Taiwan.

My position in carrying out this research in Taiwan was simultaneously one of an insider and an outsider. Since I had lived in Taiwan for one year and taught at Saint Agnes, I was familiar with the college and the particular ways things were done there. Most of the same administrators and English department faculty members that were there when I was were still at the college. They remembered me and some went to great lengths to facilitate my research there.

Since E39A students were comfortable with me and regarded me as a friend, they had no problem immediately opening up in relaying their narratives, allowing the interviews to proceed smoothly without an awkward initial 'getting to know the researcher' period. At the same time, however, I was, as an American, very much a foreigner in Taiwan, and this fact was quite obvious. This outsider

status had some advantages. Participants, for example, probably felt more at ease discussing potentially hot-button issues, such as Chinese versus Taiwanese identity and Taiwanese/Mainlander relations, with me than they would a fellow Taiwanese.

My inability to adequately converse in Mandarin Chinese was, of course, another issue that made me very much an outsider. Giving participants the option of conducting interviews in Mandarin Chinese, as Huang (2006) did, would indeed have enabled them to relay stories of their experience with greater ease. This, however, was not an option as my Mandarin abilities are strictly at a rudimentary survival level and use of an interpreter for interviews would have, I felt, greatly hindered the relaxed dialogue that I aimed to achieve in these interviews. My participants were well aware of my limited Mandarin skills though and had no problem expressing themselves in English for the written survey questionnaire, interviews, and email correspondence. English, in any case, was arguably the more appropriate medium for the research process here since it was participants' English abilities and the role of these abilities in their identity negotiation that constituted the study's main focus of inquiry.

Finally, I must acknowledge that the feelings of guilt I continue to have over the inherent unfairness of English's status as an international language – the fact that millions of English users worldwide have to struggle to learn a language I acquired effortlessly from birth – could potentially influence my presentation and analysis of participants' stories in this study. My tone could be construed as a bit too celebratory in discussions of participants claiming ownership of English and

in discussions of their language learning achievements in general. My four focal participants have all reached a much higher level of proficiency in English than I have been able to reach in Japanese, even after well over ten years of study. I am in awe and more than a little bit envious of their linguistic achievements, which I am, in fact, inclined to celebrate.

Chapter 5

Written Questionnaire Responses

On Tuesday, May 12, 2009, almost three years after I had left Taiwan and moved to Singapore, I returned to the Saint Agnes campus to begin my research. A handful of my former E39A students that I had maintained email communication with had arranged for the use of a vacant classroom and had announced to their classmates that anyone wishing to participate in my research was to meet in this classroom at the designated time to fill out my written questionnaire. For this particular semester, most of the E39A students had no classes on Tuesday, and I had initially thought this would be beneficial for student participation since there would be no classes conflicting with our scheduled meeting. This also meant, however, that the sole reason students had for coming to campus that day was to meet with me and participate in my study, so only those who were truly interested in doing so actually showed up. Out of a class of approximately 50 students, 23 came to this meeting and filled out my questionnaire.

This questionnaire (see Appendix) first dealt with a few demographic questions (such as gender, age, ethnicity, place of birth, and time spent abroad) before asking participants to rate their proficiency in and comment on their relationships with the various languages in their linguistic repertoires. The questionnaire then asked participants what language they would want their future children to speak in the hypothetical situation that they would only be able to learn and speak one

language, what their plans were after graduating from the Saint Agnes five-year college program, and what languages they envisioned themselves using in the distant future. The final item on the questionnaire then asked participants to assess the degree to which they felt they possessed the entrepreneurial self qualities of self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals. After reporting the demographic information provided by the 23 informants who completed these questionnaires, I will report on and discuss their responses to each of the other questionnaire items in turn.

5.1. Demographic Information

At the time they filled out the written questionnaire in May of 2009, sixteen of the 23 participants were 20 years old. Five were 19 and two were 21. Twenty-one of the participants were female and two were male. This reflects the female to male ratio of the class and the school as a whole. When I taught E39A, only four of the 52 students in the class were male²⁵. The fact that participants of this study were predominantly female and all in the 19 – 21 age range likely had a great affect on the responses obtained. Had they been older, their formative years would have been over and done with before the Taiwanese discourses of competitiveness and internationalization became truly omnipresent, and had they been younger, they would likely have begun English instruction at an earlier age.

²⁵ This female/male ratio can be attributed not only to the fact that Saint Agnes College was originally an all-female institution, but also to the widespread belief (regarded as ‘common sense’) in Taiwan that females are far better than males at learning languages. Some participants also expressed this belief in interviews.

In response to the questionnaire item that asked participants to choose which category best described their ethnicity ('Taiwanese,' 'Chinese,' or 'Other'), 21 of the 23 participants chose 'Taiwanese.' Only one (Shannon²⁶) picked 'Chinese,' and another student, Maggie, whose father is Japanese and mother is from Southern Taiwan chose 'Other,' specifying 'Japanese' as the category that she felt best described her ethnicity.

Twelve participants reported being the oldest children in their families, three middle, and six youngest. Two reported being only children. Thirteen of them designated that they were born in Southern Taiwan (Kaohsiung and Tainan), five in Taipei, and five in central Taiwan (Taichung, Nantou, Yunlin, and Zhang-hua).

As for time spent abroad, the vast majority of informants reported extensive experience with foreign travel. Only four of the 23 participants reported having never left Taiwan. Three reported living for extended periods of time during their childhoods in English speaking countries (South Africa, Canada, and the U.K.), and Maggie reported living in Japan for 3 years as a young child. Table 5.1 lists the places that each informant who filled out the written questionnaire reported having traveled to or lived²⁷.

²⁶ Participants were all asked to choose their own pseudonyms for this study. Some chose actual pseudonyms while others insisted I use the English name they went by at Saint Agnes, arguing that these were not their legal names and were, therefore, in effect, pseudonyms.

²⁷ For this questionnaire item, participants were instructed to state the duration of their stay if it exceeded one month. Unless otherwise noted then, participants' stays in the countries they listed were for less than one month.

Table 5.1 Participants' Overseas Travel Experiences as of May 12, 2009

Participants	Overseas Travel Experiences
Negra	None
Eric	None
Fiara	None
Annie	None
Audrey	U.K.
Roxanne	America, New Zealand
Elise	Singapore, New Zealand, U.K.
Shannon	Los Angeles (2 times), Beijing, Shanghai
Gigi	Italy, Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium (a total of 1 month in all these European countries combined), Thailand
Ophélie	France (1 month)
Becky	New Zealand (1 month), Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea, Philippines
Tia	England (1 month), Thailand, Japan
Serena	Canada (6 weeks), Japan, Korea, Malaysia
Dreamy	Canada (2 months), U.K.
Rachel	France (2 times for 2 months each)
WiBi	Canada (1 month), Australia (1 month), China (1 month), U.S.A., Japan, Russia, Finland, Malaysia
Yvette	Los Angeles (1 month), Australia, Hong Kong
Gili	U.S.A. (2 months), Japan, some Southeast Asian countries
Tracy	England (38 days), America, Japan, Korea
Maggie	Japan (3 years), Australia
Vivian	London (5 years)
Nana	Canada (6 years), Japan, Korea, Thailand, Hong Kong, China
Mickey	South Africa (over 6 years), Hong Kong

5.2 Mandarin Chinese

In rating their Mandarin Chinese proficiency on a scale of 0 to 5, with 0 representing no proficiency at all, 1 showing very minimal proficiency, and 5 representing the highest level of expertise, only three participants gave themselves top ratings of 5 for all four skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing²⁸. Looking at self-evaluations of each skill individually, the mean self-rating for Chinese listening was 4.6, speaking 4.5, reading 4.2, and writing 3.7. Participants showed the least confidence in their Mandarin Chinese writing expertise, with only three giving themselves the top score of 5. It should be noted that the lowest self-ratings for reading (2) and writing (1) were assessments made by Maggie, whose education, prior to attending Saint Agnes, was entirely at a Japanese school in Taiwan where Chinese and English were taught as second and foreign languages, but otherwise, all instruction was in Japanese. Other participants' assessments of their Chinese reading and writing proficiency on the mid to low end of the scale could be due to the emphasis placed on foreign languages at Saint Agnes – at the expense, some would say, of Mandarin Chinese. Table 5.2 shows the number and percentage of participants that selected each of the five ratings for the four Mandarin Chinese language skills.

²⁸ This could possibly be due to Asian humility – the fact that modesty is still highly valued in Taiwan (and other East Asian societies). In general, self-evaluation does not encourage participants to rate themselves at the extreme ends of the scale with 1's and 5's, and this must be taken into account, but while modesty may not permit many to give themselves the top score of 5, very low self-ratings of 1 were plentiful when participants truly felt they lacked abilities in a language (see, for example, this chapter's 'French' section 5.4).

Table 5.2 Self-evaluation of Mandarin Chinese Expertise (n = 23)

	Listening (mean score 4.6)	Speaking (mean score 4.5)	Reading (mean score 4.2)	Writing (mean score 3.7)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 5	14 (60.9%)	14 (60.9%)	9 (39.1%)	3 (13%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4	9 (39.1%)	7 (30.4%)	11 (47.8%)	12 (52.2%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3	0	2 (8.7%)	2 (8.7%)	6 (26.1%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2	0	0	1 (4.3%)	1 (4.3%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1	0	0	0	1 (4.3%)

Participants reported using Mandarin Chinese for communication with family/relatives, classmates, friends, teachers, store clerks, co-workers, neighbors, net pals, waiters, waitresses, and strangers. A few noted the almost universal utility of Mandarin Chinese in Taiwan. Serena, for example, wrote “Basically, all the people in Taiwan.” Two participants, however, pointed out the main exception to this near universal utility – the older generation. Gili wrote, “Almost everybody in young generation” and Gigi noted “Only with parents” in parentheses after listing “family.”

In their comments on their experiences learning Mandarin Chinese, many participants focused on the effortless with which they learned the language from infancy:

Naturally learn after I was born. I don't have to consider about grammar. (Dreamy)

I didn't pay much time on learning Chinese because it is my mother tongue. (Annie)

It is quite natural. My parents bought lots of books when I was a child. Reading is really helpful for me to learn Mandarin Chinese. (Yvette)

Others contrasted naturalistic Chinese learning in daily life with the study of Chinese in school, which often places considerable emphasis on ancient Chinese:

It's hard to learn or study ancient Chinese, but I feel comfortable for common Chinese which we use every day. (Serena)

In school: Not very interesting because I don't like old Chinese.

Out of school: Daily conversation makes it more fun. (Fiara)

Still others commented only on the difficulties posed by Chinese characters:

It is difficult to learn Mandarin Chinese because of the Chinese characters. (Maggie)

There are various characters which I cannot memorize how to write and pronounce very well. (Tracy)

Chinese words are difficult to write. (Nana)

It is not surprising that Maggie, with her primarily Japanese educational background, would have a more difficult time than her classmates with the Chinese characters²⁹. Tracy had a standard Taiwanese educational background, but nevertheless reported difficulty with the characters and, for her self-ratings, gave herself relatively low scores (listening: 4, speaking: 3, reading: 3, writing: 2). Nana, in spite of her comment that “Chinese words are difficult to write,” gave herself the top score of 5 for all four Mandarin Chinese skills.

Commenting on the role that Mandarin Chinese played in their present day lives, many participants simply stated that the language was “important,” “super important,” or their “main language.” Some expressed these same sentiments, but also chose to highlight the role that Mandarin Chinese played in defining their identity:

Necessity, my identity, a way to express myself. (Fiara)

It plays the most important role of communication in my life.

It’s also my native language, which represent my identity.

(Ophélie)

Others focused on the utilitarian nature of the language, referring to it as a tool:

Life skill, tool for communication. (Tracy)

²⁹ I believe my own knowledge of Japanese kanji did help me with Chinese characters in Taiwan. Maggie told me, however, that the differences in strokes and meaning caused her a great deal of confusion, and she mused that perhaps the learning of Chinese characters would actually be easier without her knowledge of Japanese kanji.

A tool that I can communicate with other people and express myself. (Audrey)

The tool to communicate with others and myself. (Annie)

Main language, tool to learn other languages. (Dreamy)

The most reliable tool :). (Yvette)

Gigi also stated practical uses for Chinese in her life, but also made a point of mentioning that it was Tai-yu that she regarded as her “mother tongue”:

A language to communicate, to gain knowledge. But it’s still Tai-yu that’s my mother tongue. (Gigi)

Finally, Maggie’s response to the question about the role of Mandarin Chinese in her life shows that she considered it a necessity, but one she was none too enthusiastic about embracing:

The language that I have to use and to learn since I am living in Taiwan. (Maggie)

5.3 English

In evaluating their English expertise, participants’ overall tendency was to rate themselves in the middle of the proficiency scale with a 3, which was by far the most frequently occurring score for each of the four skills. The mean self-rating for English listening was 3.5, speaking 3, reading 3.2, and writing 2.7. The only

top scores of 5 were reported by Mickey and Vivian, the participants that had lived in South Africa and London as children. Table 5.3 shows the number and percentage of participants that selected each of the ratings for the four English language skills. Only Audrey chose to use half-points on the scale, giving herself 3.5's for English listening and reading.

Table 5.3 Self-evaluation of English Expertise (n = 23)

	Listening (mean score 3.5)	Speaking (mean score 3)	Reading (mean score 3.2)	Writing (mean score 2.7)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 5	2 (8.7%)	1 (4.3%)	1 (4.3%)	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4	8 (34.8%)	4 (17.4%)	5 (21.7%)	2 (8.7%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3.5	1 (4.3%)	0	1 (4.3%)	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3	12 (52.2%)	12 (52.2%)	13 (56.5%)	13 (56.5%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2	0	6 (26.1%)	3 (13%)	6 (26.1%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1	0	0	0	2 (8.7%)

The age that participants reported having started learning English ranged from 3 years old to twelve years old. The mean starting age was 7.5. The youngest starting age of 3 was reported only by Mickey (who began learning at this young age in South Africa), and Mickey was indeed the most fluent English speaker in the E39A class. Some of the participants who didn't begin English instruction

until they were older, such as Audrey and Becky, had, by the time this questionnaire was administered, achieved a level of English fluency that very nearly approached that of Mickey, casting some doubt upon the “younger the better” argument that is so often put forth by those seeking to institute English instruction for very young schoolchildren. Table 5.4 shows the ages that each of the participants who filled out the written survey reported starting their learning of English.

Table 5.4 Ages that Participants Began Learning English

Age English Learning Began	Participants
3	Mickey
4	WiBi
5	Vivian, Tracy, Tia
6	Ophélie, Rachel, Nana, Elise, Gigi
7	Dreamy, Eric
8	Yvette
9	Negra, Shannon, Gili, Fiara
10	Roxanne, Serena, Maggie, Annie
11	Audrey
12	Becky

Participants reported using English with a variety of different groups of people. The most common interlocutors were “teachers,” listed by twenty of the 23 participants. For the three who did not list teachers, this was surely just an

oversight, for as English majors at Saint Agnes, they surely had English interaction with at least some of their teachers since the English department maintained an English-Only policy. Table 5.5 shows all the groups of people that each participant reported using English with.

Table 5.5 Groups Participants Reported Using English with

Participants	Groups Participants Reported Using English with
Annie	classmates, friends, teachers, strangers online
Audrey	friends, teachers, managers from work
Becky	classmates, teachers
Dreamy	relatives in Canada, teachers, my brother, friends at Saint Agnes
Elise	classmates, friends, teachers, strangers who are foreigners
Eric	classmates, teachers, net pals
Fiara	saints (church members) from abroad, people on Skype
Gigi	my boyfriend, friends met in Europe, foreign friends met in Saint Agnes, some English teachers
Gili	English or foreign teachers in school, foreign friends
Maggie	English teachers, cousins who live in Australia
Mickey	family, friends
Nana	family, friends, classmates, teachers
Negra	school teachers, strangers, friends
Ophélie	foreigners, school teachers
Rachel	teachers, classmates, friends, co-workers
Roxanne	classmates, friends, foreign friends, host family in New Zealand, friends on Skype, teachers

Serena	professors, foreign visitors
Shannon	my brother, friends and teachers in school, friends on the internet (Skype, Facebook, MSN), cousins, students at my tutoring jobs
Tia	foreigners, school teachers
Tracy	classmates, at work
Vivian	write emails to my foreign friends, sometimes use English to chat on MSN with classmates, foreign teachers, my mom who is an English teacher, club members (English Debate Society)
WiBi	friends, teachers, clerks
Yvette	school teachers

Instantly striking here is the fact that so many participants identified friends and classmates among their listed English interlocutors. In subsequent interviews and informal conversations with participants, I found that they were mostly referring to in-class English communication. Informal conversations with friends and classmates outside the classroom, they told me, were almost always conducted in Mandarin Chinese, albeit with some English words and phrases thrown in. An exception, however, was communication on Facebook and other internet venues, where a great deal of English was used not only with foreign friends, but also Saint Agnes friends and classmates.

Several participants also identified family members in their lists of English interlocutors. In some cases, these were family members that lived abroad in places like South Africa, Canada, the United States, and Australia. Other cases of English use among family members in Taiwan seems to have been mostly for the

purpose of practicing spoken English. This was the case, for example, with Shannon, who told me she spoke English with her younger brother so that he would be better prepared for the English portions of his university entrance examinations.

Participants' comments on their experiences learning English focused on a variety of different aspects of these experiences. Some pointed out practices they engaged in outside of school that helped improve their English:

Besides learning at school, I also learn English from reading books, listening to radio/CDs or watching TV. (Negra)

I like to watch English TV programs and I try to memorize the words that are useful. (Annie)

Reading newspaper, magazines, novels, watching movies without subtitles, listening to English songs, Skype with people on net. (Becky)

Some chose to make contrasts – contrasting their English learning experiences in and out of school, contrasting their early English learning experiences with those later in junior high school and at Saint Agnes, and contrasting their experiences learning English with the learning of other languages:

In school: In early years, we studied English in a very happy environment, for fun. However, we need to be more professional now since we major in English. More stressful.

Out of school: Feel easy to communicate with people. (Serena)

In: Sometimes boring

Out: Purposeful and broadening my horizon (Fiara)

I played games in English cram school and learned boring grammar when I was older. (Yvette)

I learned reading & writing mostly from school and speaking and listening from my friends. (Audrey)

Not as difficult as French because I learn it when I was 7.
More natural. (Dreamy)

I like learning English more than learning Chinese, but it is difficult to improve speaking skill because there are only a few chances to speak English. (Maggie)

Maggie was not the only participant who commented on the limited opportunities to practice spoken English in Taiwan as this was an issue that several chose to highlight:

We have less opportunity to practice English unless you have the habit to see English magazine, novel, or movie...something like that. (Gili)

I don't like too much Taiwan English teaching system. It's all about grammar. We don't have too many chances to speak.

(Rachel)

Others chose to comment on the fact that their English learning process had been very long and/or difficult, with some pointing out specific difficulties or reasons for their difficulties:

Very difficult process in school. (Gigi)

A long journey. (WiBi)

I think it's not easy to learn it because two languages are from different language systems. (Ophélie)

I have trouble in vocabulary, grammar, and I cannot use the right grammar when I am speaking. (Tracy)

Mickey and Vivian, who initially learned English in South Africa and London respectively, commented on the ease with which they had acquired English as children in these English-speaking environments. Vivian also mentioned, however, the loss of English proficiency she experienced upon returning to Taiwan:

The experience was great. I went to an English pre-primary, so everything was very natural. (Mickey)

I went to U.K. with my mom for her studies at the age of 5.

I didn't know any English even when I got there and went to the local school. My mom said it took me just two months to pick up the language and I spoke as fluent as native speaker.

However, after 5 yrs. When we returned to Taiwan, it took me less than a year to forget English because I didn't have a chance to use it when I got back. My English only slowly improved when I enroll in Saint Agnes and major in English. (Vivian)

For the questionnaire item that asked participants to describe the role that English played in their present lives, some of the same words and themes appeared repeatedly in responses. These included *important*, *necessary*, and the characterization of English a valuable tool. The following are some of the responses that explicitly conceptualized English as a tool:

A tool to communicate with other people. A part of my work.
(Audrey)

The most important tool. (Yvette)

I like to learn in English. I think English is like a tool for me, to gain more knowledge. (Mickey)

A skill (tool) to find a better job. (Nana)

While not employing the tool metaphor, other responses did stress the usefulness of English for their future employability:

It's necessary for jobs and for this society. (Rachel)

It's my second language and will be useful in later life for applying for a job. (Vivian)

A language that I am learning now and trying to make it be my profession skill. (Tracy)

Some participants' responses were quite short, simply stressing the importance of English in their lives:

Essential (Serena)

Important and necessary (Shannon)

An important language I use everyday. (Gigi)

Some responses focused specifically on communication with foreigners and the world outside Taiwan:

To communicate with people from other countries and lead a better life. (Negra)

For knowing other countries' news. (Roxanne)

Second language to learn more from abroad (culture),
to make friend with people out of Taiwan (Dreamy)

It's important for us to communicate with foreigners. (Ophélie)

A few responses, however, made no mention whatsoever of the importance or necessity of English for employment or communication with foreigners:

One of my capacities (Fiara)

The language that I like, and I want to improve a lot. (Maggie)

It is part of my life now! I like songs and TV programs in English. Sometimes I can even say something in English but cannot translate it in Chinese. (Annie)

Only Gili depicted English as non-essential:

Like vitamin C: I can live without it, but I will be better if I get it. (Gili)

5.4 French

Prior to taking their French courses at Saint Agnes, none of the participants had had any prior French instruction. Twelve of the twenty-three participants reported being 15 years old when they started French instruction their first year at Saint Agnes and eleven reported being 16 years old. Their introduction to French was, therefore, very different from the manner in which most of them had been eased

into the English language at a relatively early age with songs, games, and simple vocabulary items. This didn't bother some participants, but others truly struggled with the language. Indeed, French was quite a polarizing subject for E39A students, for they tended to either embrace the language wholeheartedly or absolutely despise it, with only a few students falling somewhere in between. Self-evaluations on the four French skills reflected this polarization with many participants giving themselves all 1's or mostly 1's and a few 2's. A few even rated some skills with 0's, indicating no proficiency at all. Although no one gave themselves a 5 for any of the four skills (as is to be expected for a language they just began learning a few years prior³⁰), quite a few 3's and even one 4 did appear in the self-evaluations of some participants who regarded French extremely favorably. Just as she did with English, Audrey again used half-points here, reporting a 1.5 level of proficiency for French listening and a 2.5 for French writing. The mean self-rating for French listening was 1.8, speaking 1.7, reading 2, and writing 1.4. Table 5.6 shows the number and percentage of participants that selected each of the ratings for the four French language skills.

³⁰ And again, Asian humility must be taken into account.

Table 5.6 Self-evaluation of French Expertise (no = 23)

	Listening (mean score 1.8)	Speaking (mean score 1.7)	Reading (mean score 2)	Writing (mean score 1.4)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 5	0	0	0	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4	0	0	1 (4.3%)	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3	6 (26.1%)	4 (17.4%)	5 (21.7%)	1 (4.3%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2.5	0	0	0	1 (4.3%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2	5 (21.7%)	8 (34.8%)	9 (39.1%)	9 (39.1%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1.5	1 (4.3%)	0	0	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1	11 (47.8%)	10 (43.5%)	8 (34.8%)	8 (34.8%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 0	0	1 (4.3%)	0	4 (17.4%)

The lack of opportunity to use French in Taiwan was very evident in participants' listing of groups they used French to communicate with. One participant (Dreamy) wrote "None," while another (Mickey) wrote "None, except teachers MAYBE." Another six wrote "French teachers only." Nine participants listed "teachers and classmates," "teachers and friends," or "teachers, friends, and classmates." In many cases, this likely referred to in-class French use with friends and classmates. One participant (Eric) actually qualified his listing of

classmates by adding “in class.” This is not to say that participants didn’t use French at all with their Taiwanese friends outside of class. Such French use, however, was generally restricted to a few French phrases thrown into Chinese conversation (or thrown into their English or Chinese in Facebook communication). As Serena explained on her questionnaire, “We use it for fun, not exactly speak it but use it in funny way.” The listing of “friends,” however, did not necessarily mean Taiwanese friends only. Audrey, for example, listed “friends & teachers” on her questionnaire, but I know that her friends did, in fact, include a few French and Belgian exchange students. I also know that several participants did have French-speaking internet friends. Gigi acknowledged interaction with such friends when she listed “net pals” on the questionnaire. Only five participants specifically listed “French people” or “French-speaking people” on the questionnaires though. Along with “net pals,” Gigi listed “friends met in France.” Negra wrote “people who speak French on internet and in life.” Gili listed “Friends’ French friend,” indicating that her relationship with this French interlocutor was a rather indirect one – a friend of her friends instead of her own friend – and therefore, most likely, an infrequent conversation partner.

For their comments on their French learning experience, three participants chose to focus on the lack of opportunities to speak French in Taiwan:

In Taiwan you don’t really have that many opportunities to learn French out of school. (Audrey)

The teachers try hard to teach us. We have no opportunity to practice it. (Gili)

We don't have too many chances to speak. The Taiwan environment is not good enough to learn second foreign languages except Japanese. (Rachel)

While she didn't comment directly on the lack of French-speaking opportunities in Taiwan, Becky's response also indicates that this was indeed a problem:

Taking the French courses to improve my French listening, reading and writing. Trying to talk to myself in French to improve the speaking part. (Becky)

Some participants' comments focused on the difficulty they had studying the language:

Very difficult language to learn (Maggie)

Hard to learn, especially the grammar and tense of verb. (Dreamy)

I think the tense and grammar is very difficult. I didn't learn it well, so I feel a little upset. (Elise)

French is much more difficult than English, and it's not romantic. (Nana)

Others had even more negative comments:

It is a terrible experience. (Shannon)

Suffering (WiBi)

I hate conjugation so much and I didn't do a good job on it.

(Yvette)

Hated it!! Didn't enjoy it at all. The way of learning it was very different from learning English. (Mickey)

Four participants, however, did have positive comments about their experiences learning French:

It's easy to learn. (Eric)

I am happy to learn French. Funny and easy. (Serena)

Very interesting language which helps me to broaden my horizon. (Gigi)

It's funny. (Ophélie)

Most participants reported that French really didn't play much of a role in their present lives since most of them were no longer taking French courses. Some of those with the most negative attitudes toward the language simply discounted any possibility that it could play any role in their lives:

No role! (Mickey)

Nothing (WiBi)

Annoying and unnecessary (Shannon)

Others indicated that they regarded the language as nothing more than a distant memory:

My past (Tracy)

The ex-boyfriend (Yvette)

Like a dream. I remember just a very little part about it. (Gili)

Still other comments showed that although these participants had put French behind them, some knowledge of the language still, on occasion, brought them joy:

I will feel happy and excited if I meet someone who can speak French. (Elise)

Sometimes hear other people speak French and feel happy. (Dreamy)

Only one response utilized the tool metaphor for describing her relationship with French:

It's just a tool for me when I speak to French or read French articles. (Tia)

Two responses though showed that these participants regarded their French abilities as assets in a competitive job market:

An ability which can gain my potential competitiveness. (Serena)

To have the second foreign language skills and have more opportunities in finding jobs. (Negra)

Some participants' responses did show a decidedly positive attitude toward French and its place in their lives:

Language that I am eager to learn it well. (Becky)

Language I want to speak fluently. (Nana)

An entertainment & interest (Audrey)

The most enthusiastic response by far, however, came from Rachel:

French plays a very important role in my life. For me, it's not just a language but a culture. Therefore, I'll keep learning even though I graduate. (Rachel)

5.5 Tai-yu

Of the 23 participants who filled out the written questionnaire, all but one (Shannon) reported at least some Tai-yu proficiency³¹. There was a wide range of

³¹ If this questionnaire had been administered in the Taipei area, where there are considerably more residents with Mainlander family backgrounds, there would surely have been far more respondents reporting no knowledge of Tai-yu. Although no item on the written questionnaire explicitly asked participants whether their family background was Taiwanese or Mainlander, interviews and informal conversations with participants revealed that Shannon was the only

expertise reported. Many claimed high levels of proficiency with self-ratings of 4 and 5 for listening and speaking, while others reported more modest levels of proficiency with 1's, 2's, and 3's. Since Tai-yu is primarily a spoken language, however, it has no standardized written form³² and, until recently, has not been taught in Taiwanese schools. The majority of participants, therefore, gave themselves 0's (indicating no proficiency) for the skills of reading and writing. Table 5.7 shows the number and percentage of participants that selected each of the ratings for the four Tai-yu skills. Audrey, yet again, chose to use half-points to report a Tai-yu listening level of 3.5.

Table 5.7 Self-evaluation of Tai-yu Expertise (n = 22)

	Listening (mean score 3.7)	Speaking (mean score 2.7)	Reading (mean score 0)	Writing (mean score 0)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 5	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	0	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4	10 (45.5%)	6 (27.3%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3.5	0	1 (4.5%)	0	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3	6 (27.3%)	8 (36.4%)	3 (13.6%)	1 (4.5%)

member of E39A with 100% Mainlander ancestry. At least three other participants, however, had one parent with a Mainlander family background.

³² When Tai-yu is written, the same traditional Chinese characters used for Mandarin Chinese are usually used. Romanization is also sometimes employed, as is *Bopomo* – the phonetic script often used in Taiwanese children's books. Because there are quite a few Tai-yu words that lack Mandarin Chinese equivalents though, a combination of traditional Chinese characters, Romanization, and *Bopomo* is sometimes employed for rendering Tai-yu in written form. For an informative discussion of written Tai-yu and attitudes toward written Tai-yu in Taiwan, see Chiung (2001).

Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2	2 (9.1%)	4 (18.2%)	1 (4.5%)	1 (4.5%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1	0	2 (9.1%)	3 (13.6%)	2 (9.1%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 0	0	0	14 (63.6%)	17 (77.3%)

Two participants (Mickey and Ophélie) reported using Tai-yu only with their grandparents, and Audrey wrote “family members, especially my grandmother.” Others reported using Tai-yu with grandparents, as well as others that they considered older people:

grandparents’ generation and the middle-aged people. (Yvette)

In my daily life, I usually need to speak Tai-yu with my grandmother and other elders whose age is around 45 or over. (Serena)

Many participants reported using Tai-yu with “family” or “relatives.” A few indicated that they used the language with a wide variety of different people. Tracy, for example, wrote “Everywhere I go,” and Negra reported that she used Tai-yu with “family members and local people here in Taiwan.” Maggie listed her mother as the only person that she used Tai-yu with. Eight participants listed friends or classmates (in addition to family members) as Tai-yu interlocutors³³.

³³ In interviews with focal and stand-by participants, as well as informal conversations with other members of E39A, I have been told, however, that Tai-yu use among friends is mostly restricted to certain functions, such as cursing or telling jokes.

Rachel was the only participant who reported using Tai-yu in her workplace, and Becky was the only participant who claimed some proficiency, but admitted not really using Tai-yu with anyone.

In their comments on their experiences learning Tai-yu, most of the 22 participants claiming knowledge of the language focused on the fact that they learned it naturally as young children. The following are a few examples of such comments:

Mother tongue. I learnt it by nature. (Gigi)

I've been speaking Taiwanese since I was born. I learn it from talking to my family members. (Negra)

I don't remember. I just know how to say it. (Ophélie)

We learn it naturally but we have no chance to learn how to write and read. (Rachel)

My native tongue is Taiwanese. You can hardly learn Taiwanese in school. (Audrey)

Others relayed more detailed stories about their Tai-yu acquisition:

I used to watch some Taiwanese dramas which makes me learn some Tai-yu and also after I moved to Tainan (I grew up in Taipei), I started to have more chances to listen the people around me speaking Tai-yu. (Becky)

I could speak and listen Taiwanese before I went to U.K.

(5 yrs. Old). But when I lived in U.K., my mom never spoke it to me so I lost it. Now coming back, it is hard for me to pick it up again. (Vivian)

Just as they had done with other languages, a few participants, in describing the role of Tai-yu in their lives, utilized the tool metaphor:

The most interesting tool. (Yvette)

Also an important tool. (Gili)

A tool to communicate with my grandmother.

Useful when you try to make a joke. (Audrey)

Audrey was not the only participant who regarded the facilitation of communication with a grandparent or older folk to be one of Tai-yu's main roles.

Several others expressed similar sentiments:

To be closer to older people like grandpa or grandma (Dreamy)

Communicating with older people (Mickey)

Important (The only way to communicate with grandpa & grandma)
(Nana)

Roxanne not only identified communication with elderly family members as a key role of Tai-yu in her life, but also went on to reveal that for her, it very much played a role in defining her cultural identity:

In our family, we use Taiwanese all the time because the elders could not understand Chinese, so without this language we are hard to communicate. I think today, too few people could speak this and that is the reason why we are losing some of our culture. So, if I have my next generation, I will speak Taiwanese with them as well. (Roxanne)

Others expressed, in various ways, the importance of Tai-yu in their lives. Negra simply stated, “My mother tongue!” and Eric wrote, “Main language.” Rachel also noted the role Tai-yu played in helping her to identify herself as Taiwanese when she traveled abroad³⁴:

This is very important and basic language in my life. Taiwanese can help me to identify myself internationally. (Rachel)

A few participants, however, admitted that Tai-yu, at least at the time they were completing the questionnaires, played little or no role in their lives:

Since I went to high school, hardly had chance to speak it. (Gigi)

³⁴ Rachel explained that when she was in France, she often taught her new French friends and acquaintances a few Tai-yu words or phrases as a way of pointing out how Taiwan is culturally distinct from Mainland China.

Actually I don't use it in my daily life. Although my parents they do speak it fluently, they speak to me in Mandarin Chinese all the time, so I really don't get a chance to speak it. (Becky)

It should be my mother language....but hopefully I could be fluent in the next few years, otherwise I will have trouble finding a job in Taiwan. (Vivian)

5.6 Other Languages in Participants' Linguistic Repertoires

Five of the 23 questionnaire participants claimed at least some proficiency in a fourth language. For three of these five participants, acquisition of these languages was a result of circumstance. Maggie learned Japanese as her first language from infancy, Elise picked up some Hakka proficiency from her grandparents as a child, and Nana learned some Cantonese from friends when she was living in Canada. For Gigi and Dreamy though, study of Italian and Korean was completely voluntary – purely a result of personal interest in the languages.

5.6.1 Maggie's Japanese

Maggie reported learning Japanese from birth and claimed utmost proficiency in the language, giving herself top scores of 5 for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. She listed her mother, father, and Japanese friends as those she used Japanese to communicate with, and for the questionnaire item asking her to describe the role of Japanese in her life, she simply wrote, “mother tongue.”

5.6.2 Elise's Hakka

Elise estimated that she began getting exposure to Hakka at the age of five, listening to her grandparents speaking the language. "I could listen and understand what they said when I was very little and nobody taught me," she wrote. Evaluating her Hakka proficiency, she gave herself a 3 for listening and a 1 for speaking (0's for both reading and writing), explaining, "I can understand what they said by listening but I only can speak very few words." Reporting on the role of the language (or lack thereof) in her life, Elise wrote, "I think Hakka really doesn't have much of a role in my life. Because I didn't speak it. It is a language which my grandparents speak."

5.6.3 Nana's Cantonese

Six years of Nana's childhood were spent in Canada, where most of the Chinese population are Cantonese speakers. It is, therefore, not surprising that she learned some Cantonese while living there. She reported starting to learn Cantonese at the age of eight, and in her proficiency self-ratings, gave herself a listening score of 2 and a speaking score of 1 (0's for both reading and writing). She listed "friends" as the only group that she used Cantonese to communicate with and commented that the language "sounds like Taiwanese." As for the role that Cantonese played in her life, she wrote, "not very useful."

5.6.4 Gigi's Italian

Gigi reported starting her study of Italian when she was eighteen years old, and claimed proficiency levels of 2 for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. She reported sometimes using Italian with her boyfriend and also with a friend she met in Italy. Commenting on her experience learning Italian, she wrote, "Self-taught. It's a very entertaining n' stressless experience to learn a language by myself." To describe the role that Italian played in her life, Gigi wrote, "The language I love the most. Never get tired of studying it. Wish one day I could achieve speaking it fluently."

5.6.5 Dreamy's Korean

Dreamy's interest in Korean came from watching Korean drama serials on television. She reported starting to learn Korean when she was nineteen years old. At that time, she and a few of her friends who also watched Korean dramas frequently all took an elective Korean course for two semesters at Saint Agnes and she reported speaking Korean with these friends ("for fun," she specified). Describing her experience studying Korean as learning "from TV and teacher only for fun," she gave herself proficiency self-ratings of 1 for both listening and speaking (0's for reading and writing). In describing the role that Korean played in her life, she wrote, "Makes me understand more about Korean series."

5.7 Most Important Language for Future Children

For the questionnaire item that asked participants what one language they would want their future children to know in the hypothetical situation that they would only be allowed to learn and speak one language, eleven of the 23 questionnaire participants chose Mandarin Chinese, ten English, one French, and one Russian.

Of the eleven participants that identified Mandarin Chinese as the language they would wish their future children to know, only two specifically stated that this would be for reasons related to identity:

Because it's our native language which represent our identity. (Ophélie)

It's the way to show who you are, where you come from. And

Chinese is the language used by more people. (Rachel)

Others, like Rachel, identified the fact that Chinese is indeed a widely used and increasingly important world language as the reason for their choice:

There are more and more people learning Chinese and I think Chinese would become a language that people need to learn how to use. (Negra)

Chinese will be the most important and powerful language in the future. (Becky)

Because in the future China will become powerful. (Tia)

No less pragmatic were the reasons given by Elise and Gili:

It is because he/she will live in Taiwan. (Elise)

I can communicate with him/her without any gap or misunderstanding. (Gili)

Audrey stated that her selection of Mandarin Chinese for this questionnaire item was due to the particular logic and, in her view, sophistication, that characterized the language:

The way of thinking of Chinese is very sophisticated, careful, and understandable. (Audrey)

Roxanne and Annie both felt that Chinese was more difficult to learn than English, and because of this, they would want their future children to learn Mandarin Chinese, so that their subsequent learning of English (presumably after the hypothetical 'one language' rule had been lifted) would be easier for them than learning Chinese as English speakers.

The language trend is Chinese and English, and I think maybe Chinese would be more difficult. (Roxanne)

It becomes very popular, and it is harder than English. (Annie)

Of the ten participants who chose English as the one language they would want their future children to learn, only pragmatic reasons were given. Most of these stated reasons had to do with the widespread utility of English around the world:

It's more useful cause much more people speak English. (Dreamy)

It will be helpful for them to communicate with people all over the world. (Maggie)

Although China is getting stronger and stronger, English is still the most spoken language. I want my kid to be able to communicate with people around the world. (Mickey)

It's the most frequent-used one (by most prosperous countries)
(Fiara)

English is very important in every area. (Nana)

It is the international language. (Tracy)

Others had different, but no less pragmatic, reasons for choosing English as the one language they would want their children to learn:

Now English is an essential tool to get a better job, so English is needed. (Serena)

I would want my children to receive a western education if possible.

(Vivian)

Eric's choice of French as the one language he would want his future children to know was due to his perception that the French language was somewhat less ambiguous than other languages he was familiar with. "There're less misunderstandings in the French language," he wrote. WiBi's choice of Russian was motivated by his perception that the language was extremely difficult. Like those who chose Mandarin Chinese because it was more difficult than English, WiBi felt that other languages might be easier for his future children to learn later (again, presumably after the hypothetical 'one language' rule was lifted) if they already knew Russian. He wrote, "That is the most complicated language to learn, and learning Russian can help learning others someday."

5.8 Plans for after Graduation from the Saint Agnes Five-year Program

At the time they completed the questionnaires, almost all of the twenty-three participants had at least tentative plans of continuing with their studies after graduating from the Saint Agnes five-year junior college program. Only WiBi and Rachel had definite plans that did not involve further schooling. WiBi reported that he intended to join the army, while Rachel had international business aspirations. She indicated both her short and long-term plans as follows:

I'll work in international trade and I hope to find a job related to finance because I hope I can work in France in nearly 15 years.

Elise reported being undecided about whether to continue with school or work. “If I go to work,” she wrote, “I want to be an English teacher at a cram school.”

Fourteen participants indicated that, in their further studies, they intended to continue to focus on languages, either at Saint Agnes or some other tertiary institution. Becky was not at all specific in her response, simply writing “languages.” Seven participants reported that they would continue to be English majors. Gili wrote that she would major in either English or Mass Communications. Two participants (Shannon and Serena) expressed their intentions of entering a Translation & Interpretation program, and three (Eric, Ophélie, and Nana) reported plans of becoming French majors. Of these fourteen participants that intended to continue with language-related studies, only Mickey indicated more long-term plans after receiving her undergraduate English degree:

Get a master and then perhaps a Ph.D. If I only get a master, perhaps go in the service industry, Ph.D. – professor.

Six participants reported intentions of pursuing university degrees in areas unrelated to foreign languages. Vivian and Roxanne both indicated that they planned to declare business-related majors, such as economics and finance, while Audrey wrote that she wanted to focus on “marketing and fashion industry.” Tia reported plans to study anthropology and archeology, and Yvette wrote, “I hope I can transfer into an advertising department in a university in Taipei.” Gigi indicated that she wanted to study design for the next three years “and eventually go to work in Italy.”

5.9 Languages Participants Imagine Themselves Using in the Distant Future

The next questionnaire item asked participants to imagine themselves ten years into the future and report what languages they envisioned themselves using with what groups. A wide variety of languages were reported – some of them languages that the participants had actually not yet studied at all, like Arabic and Finish.

The most commonly envisioned scenario was the future use of English and Mandarin Chinese. Ten of the twenty-three participants reported having this vision. Although most neglected to indicate what groups they imagined themselves using English and Mandarin Chinese with, a few did offer these details:

I will use Chinese and English to communicate with family members, relatives, friends, co-workers and students. (Elise)

Mandarin Chinese to family members, other Chinese

English to foreigners (Tia)

Still Mandarin Chinese but I might be asked to use English in my job.

(Tracy)

Only one participant (Ophélie) reported an image of herself only using Mandarin Chinese. “I think it will still be Mandarin Chinese,” she wrote. Two (Eric and Gili) imagined themselves only speaking Mandarin Chinese and Tai-yu, with Gili

specifically stating that she saw herself also speaking Chinese to foreigners in the future:

Chinese to most people (including foreigners)

Tai-yu to elder people (Gili)

Maggie reported multiple images depending on where she ended up living and working. She indicated that she imagined herself using mostly Chinese if she stayed in Taiwan, but added “I want to go back to Japan to work.”

Gigi indicated that she envisioned herself using, in ten years, all the languages that were in her linguistic repertoire at the time – Chinese, Tai-yu, English, French, and Italian. Italian was mentioned in the visions of two other participants as well. Becky wrote “English & Italian” in spite of the fact that she claimed no proficiency in Italian at the time she filled out the questionnaire, and Nana wrote “Italian,” and went on to explain, “I plan to study in Italy in the future.”

Four participants reported imagining themselves at least possibly using French ten years in the future, but in Yvette’s case, this was expressed with some displeasure:

English, Mandarin Chinese, ok, maybe French ☹ in the working place

(Yvette)

Fiara wrote, “English and French with people in Europe.” Rachel listed all the languages in her linguistic repertoire at the time (French, English, Chinese, and Tai-yu with “friends, family, co-workers”) and added “maybe Japanese.” In

addition to French, English, and Chinese, Audrey reported an image of herself using two languages that she had not yet begun to study – Korean and Cantonese:

I think I will still use English and Chinese most of the time, but more Korean, French, or Cantonese than now. Speak those languages to my friends, family and co-workers. (Audrey)

Finally, two participants reported imagining themselves using languages they did not yet claim any proficiency in and are seldom, if ever, taught in Taiwan – Arabic and Finnish. Serena wrote “Chinese and Arabic. I think I will use it to communicate with business people.” WiBi wrote, “Finish or English, with friends and classmates.” WiBi had listed Finland as one of the countries he had visited, so Finland and the Finish language had apparently made a positive impression on him during that trip.

5.10 Entrepreneurial Self Qualities

The final item on the questionnaire asked participants to rate, on a scale of zero to five (with 0 being ‘not at all’ and 5 being ‘very strong’) the degree to which they felt they possessed three qualities that are highly valued in enterprise culture: self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals. Table 5.8 shows how participants rated themselves on these entrepreneurial self qualities. Two participants left this item blank.

Table 5.8 Self-evaluation of Entrepreneurial Self Qualities (n = 21)

	Self-reliance (mean score 3.2)	Boldness (mean score 3)	Willingness to Take Risks (mean score 3.9)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 0	0	2 (9.5%)	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 1	1 (4.8%)	0	0
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 2	1 (4.8%)	1 (4.8%)	2 (9.5%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 3	8 (38.1%)	12 (57.1%)	5 (23.8%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4	8 (38.1%)	5 (23.8%)	6 (28.6%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 4.5	1 (4.8%)	0	1 (4.8%)
Number and % of participants with self-rating of 5	2 (9.5%)	1 (4.8%)	7 (33.3%)

For the most part, these self-ratings by the twenty-one participants who completed this questionnaire item corresponded with my own impressions of them when they were my students three years earlier. Those rating themselves on the high end of the scale with 4's and 5's, such as Rachel, Audrey, Mickey, and Vivian, had, in fact, struck me as being highly self-reliant bold risk-takers, and those who rated themselves on the low end of the scale with 0's, 1's, and 2's, like Fiara and Maggie, tended to be those that I had considered quite timid. There were exceptions though. I had always considered Shannon quite bold and outgoing, for example, but she rated herself with a 0 for 'boldness.'³⁵ Tracy was another participant whose self-ratings for this questionnaire item did not mesh at all with the impressions I had of her when she was my student. As my student,

³⁵ Shannon's self-rating of 0 for 'boldness' will be discussed further in her 'story' – Chapter 9.

she seemed to me to be extremely self-reliant and outgoing. She was, in fact, the class president during the year that I taught the class. Nevertheless, Tracy rated herself with a 1 for ‘self-reliance,’ a 2 for ‘boldness,’ and a 3 for ‘willingness to take risks to achieve goals.’

5.11 Concluding Remarks about Questionnaire Responses

So what do the responses on the twenty-three written questionnaires reveal about this group of students overall? First, it shows that they largely considered ‘Taiwanese’ to be the ethnic categorization that described them best, and the vast majority of them have at least some overseas travel experience. Not surprisingly, most considered themselves quite proficient in and had extremely close affiliations with Mandarin Chinese, the language that even those who claimed Tai-yu as their “mother tongue” could communicate in most confidently. Participants, overall, considered themselves moderately proficient in English and regarded the English language as important, necessary for success in the job market, and useful for communication with the world outside Taiwan, reflecting the discourses of competitiveness and internationalization that are frequently put forth by the Taiwan government. The extent to which they used English outside the classroom varied and strong affiliations with the language were generally not evident from their questionnaire comments since these comments tended to focus on the importance or usefulness of English rather than their personal relationships with the language. Only a few claimed close affiliations with French, but there was a consensus about opportunities for French use in Taiwan outside the classroom

being almost nonexistent. Most participants did claim close affiliations with Tai-yu. The extent to which they reported actually using the language varied wildly, however, ranging from not at all or only with grandparents to “everywhere I go” (Tracy). None of the participants indicated that they had plans to study abroad immediately after graduation from the Saint Agnes five-year college program³⁶, with almost all of them reporting that they intended to continue their education in Taiwan. Quite a few, however, did aspire to eventually study, live, and work overseas as part of their long-term plans. In keeping with their depiction of English as important and necessary, most participants envisioned themselves using English (in combination with Mandarin Chinese and a variety of other languages) ten years into the future. Finally, this group of participants, overall, considered themselves to possess fairly high levels of self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals, with only a few giving themselves scores below 3 for these qualities.

The responses on the twenty-three questionnaires do then arguably provide us with a great deal of information about these participants and their relationships with the languages in their linguistic repertoires. It is very much surface information though – a sort of aerial view that provides a sense of the landscape, but does not allow us to discern any detail. And it is in the details that the answers to the questions central to this study lie. In condensing their feelings and experiences into short sentences or phrases for questionnaire responses, participants have revealed little about how English and other foreign languages

³⁶ Three participants did, however, end up going overseas to study the following semester – Mickey in the U.K., Yvette in the United States, and Serena in Czech.

have impacted their identities, what cultural associations they might make with various languages, and the extent to which they might feel a sense of ownership in the English language. Characterizing a language as “important,” “essential,” or “difficult to learn” says nothing about the strength of one’s affiliation with the language. High self-ratings for proficiency in a language do not necessarily indicate the amount of investment from which that proficiency resulted, nor how that investment was directed – investment in the language itself or investment in communities, real or imagined. For these sorts of details, we must set aside our aerial view and zoom in on the lives of individual participants. This is precisely what we shall do in the next four chapters, detailing the stories of the four focal participants – Gigi, Audrey, Rachel, and Shannon.

Chapter 6

Gigi's Story

While the very extroverted personalities of some participants clearly facilitated opportunities for foreign language use, this was not the case for Gigi, who I would definitely characterize as the most introverted of the four whose stories appear here. Through conscious efforts to overcome her shyness and a bit of luck with having opportunities come to her by chance, however, Gigi managed to become an active participant in various communities where English, French, and Italian were used. And through her participation in these communities, she has cultivated an image of herself as an international person with a broad worldview – an identity that she saw as differentiating her from many of her Taiwanese peers.

6.1 Life before Saint Agnes

Several of the focal participants in this study claimed strong affiliations with Tai-yu, but Gigi is perhaps the one with the most experience using the language throughout her childhood. In the written questionnaire, she described Tai-yu as her “mother tongue,” and growing up in a small town in rural Kaohsiung county two hours from the city by bus, almost everyone she knew as a child was a Tai-yu speaker. “Everyone spoke Tai-yu – Taiwanese style,” she reported. “We didn’t speak Chinese that much.” Although teachers at the small elementary school she attended did conduct their classes in Mandarin Chinese, many of these same teachers used Tai-yu when speaking to students informally. In this school of only

one hundred students, there was, in fact, only one student that came from a Mainlander family and did not speak Tai-yu. Not surprisingly, this child had a pretty hard time in such an environment. “He didn’t feel comfortable with friends,” Gigi recalled. “Tai-yu was definitely the language that if someone could speak, we would speak.”

Gigi reported having happy memories of her elementary school years at this small school. Although she claimed that she didn’t exert very much effort with her studies as a child, she nevertheless excelled academically due to support she received from her mother, who actually owned and taught at her own cram school. “I was always the top student in the class because my mom, she really paid lots of attention on my education – like mathematics or science stuff,” she told me. As the owner of a cram school, Gigi’s mother was in the position of being able to utilize her school’s teachers and learning materials for the education of her own children, who received private tutoring from the school’s teachers. Although English education at Gigi’s elementary school did not begin until the sixth grade, her mother employed a private tutor for English lessons for her and her brother when they were very young and later sent them both to a cram school that specialized in teaching English to small children. Gigi didn’t remember much from these early English experiences, except that they played games. “I was not inspired at all,” she recalled. At the beginning of her fifth grade year, Gigi got more early English instruction when her mother sent her to private lessons with an American couple that had just returned to Taiwan from overseas, but it was not until a year later when she started English classes at her elementary school that

Gigi started to have a very positive view of English. This came about not because of any newfound passion for the language itself, but simply because her years of tutoring and cram schools had provided her with a greater knowledge of English than her peers. As Gigi herself put it, “I happened to be the student who had the better English knowledge background in my class, so I guess I wanted to learn it because I felt a certain superior sensation in front of my mates, but not because of the language itself.”

Given Gigi’s mother’s emphasis on academic achievement, it is not at all surprising that her parents spoke to her and her siblings in Mandarin Chinese rather than Tai-yu, despite the fact that both parents were fluent Tai-yu speakers. Since Mandarin Chinese is, of course, the language of instruction in the schools, her parents undoubtedly felt it necessary to provide their children with a firm foundation in the language. This was not the case, however, for Gigi’s other relatives, who all lived a short distance from her. “My parents, they try to speak Chinese with my brother and my sister and me, but the other relatives, such as my grandma, grandfather, the aunts and uncles, they all speak Taiwanese,” she explained. As is so often the case, her older relatives were, in fact, unable to speak Mandarin Chinese, so Tai-yu was absolutely necessary for communication with these family members.

After completing all six years of elementary school in her hometown, Gigi was sent to an exclusive prep school two hours away. Her experience at this school, which she described as “a private school mostly for rich students,” was a thoroughly miserable one. To start with, she was dreadfully tired every day as a

result of the two hour commute by bus – four hours spent daily just getting to and returning from school. “I had to wake up at five, and then went to school every day...I was really tired every day, so it was really stressful,” she recalled. At this school, she no longer had the star pupil status she enjoyed at her elementary school. “I didn’t like to go to school, and so I didn’t study hard...I didn’t get good marks. I was always the 30-something ranked,” she told me. Going to school in an environment that was not as Tai-yu dominant as her elementary school had been also proved stressful for Gigi. Her Tai-yu, she felt, negatively impacted her Mandarin pronunciation. She commented on this, telling me, “I was very embarrassed ‘cuz I didn’t pronounce the Chinese very well – ‘correctly’ as they say.”

Despite her low class ranking at the prep school, Gigi’s grades there were not uniformly bad. It was mostly her poor performance in math and science classes that brought down her ranking. Her scores in English, in contrast, were actually quite good. One thing that almost certainly helped Gigi’s English during this period was practicing spoken English with her mother at home. Gigi and her mother continued with this practice for several years, but it was during her time in junior high school that their practice sessions were most frequent. These practice sessions with her mother were, without a doubt, highly beneficial for Gigi’s English development, and certainly gave her an advantage over her junior high school classmates in the spoken English department.

Most of Gigi’s classmates, after completing the three years of junior high at the prep school, continued there for their high school years. Gigi’s mother, however,

recognizing that English was the only subject Gigi was performing well in, suggested that she instead enroll in the Saint Agnes five-year junior college program. Enthusiastic about the prospect of avoiding another three years of math and science classes, Gigi was quite receptive to this idea. “I was really happy,” she told me, “‘cuz I didn’t want to go to high school to study mathematics and science – that stuff again.” The avoidance of math and science, however, was not the only thing that appealed to Gigi about attending Saint Agnes. For her, it was yet another point that would make her stand out from her peers. “I think the decision taken was a mixture of the expectation of my mom and my fantasy of being an English major college student while all my junior high school mates were going to high school,” she explained.

The fantasy life she envisioned at Saint Agnes at the time was also largely influenced by her mother, who had, for years, regarded Saint Agnes quite highly. “She told me back in her college years, Saint Agnes was, like, the top school for every girl who graduated from junior high school,” Gigi informed me. Her mother had also seen a friend who had graduated from Saint Agnes become quite proficient in English and go on to secure a very good job with an international company, which sent her to work abroad in the United States. When describing Saint Agnes to Gigi, her mother characterized the school as an exotic and international environment where foreign languages and ideas flourished – an environment uniquely suited to cultivate an international outlook. “That’s the image that my mom gave me,” Gigi recalled. “And also, if you go to study French, then you will become like French – as romantic as French people – and

you will be speaking like you're European... That was fascinating for me."

Reflecting on this imagined community her mother had instilled in her at the time, Gigi further commented on its influence on her decision to attend Saint Agnes, saying "Obviously my intention at the moment was not English language itself, but more likely an imaginative idea towards the future."

6.2 Struggles at Saint Agnes

Although she claimed to have had no particular passion for the English language itself upon entering Saint Agnes, being good at English was an integral part of Gigi's identity at that time. English was something she had consistently proven herself able to excel at, relative to others in her elementary and junior high school classes. This part of her identity, however, took a beating during her first year at Saint Agnes, where her English skills paled in comparison to some other classmates – particularly those who had spent substantial portions of their childhoods abroad. "I was really stressed when I see the other students speaking English so well," she remembered. "In the class, sometimes teacher would ask questions, and these students, they always take the initiative to answer... I wanted to be like them as well, but it was difficult 'cuz I couldn't have very good structure when I speak, and then the grammar – I was really worried I would speak wrong... I was really envious in the beginning – about their language skill."

Being intimidated by these classmates' higher English proficiency wasn't the only blow her 'English speaker' identity took that first year. At one point, all first-year English majors had to take a proficiency exam that would determine

their groupings for the listening classes they would take in their second year, with Class 1 being those that got the highest scores on this exam and Class 6 being those that got the lowest. Gigi's mediocre score placed her in Class 3 for listening. "I was in the middle," she told me.

These experiences her first year – being intimidated by classmates with higher English proficiency, lacking the confidence to speak in class, and achieving only a mediocre score on the placement exam – all made Gigi determined to become more proficient in English. It was, after all, a matter of pride – regaining her identity as someone better at English than others. To achieve this, she focused on English media. "I went to the library every day and listened to radios and tried to better my English in any possible way," she recalled. She watched English movies with English subtitles, taking note of words she didn't know and looked them up when she returned to her dorm room. It was radio programs that she credited with helping her most though – particularly a BBC Radio program entitled *Women's Hour*, which she downloaded from the BBC website and listened to repeatedly. "In the beginning, I did not understand what they were saying, so I just keep playing even though I didn't understand," she told me.

This dogged determination to improve her English was, in fact, what I remember most about Gigi as a student in her second year at Saint Agnes when I was her teacher. I remember her overall English proficiency level as being decidedly "in the middle" relative to her classmates; some were far better English speakers, while many were far worse. It was obvious to me, however, that she was trying very hard. She was one of just a handful of students in this class for

whom I could clearly see a marked improvement over the course of that year. For Gigi, this visible improvement was both in the fluency of her spoken English and with written assignments.

Gigi's proficiency continued to improve steadily, and by her third year at Saint Agnes, her grades in the previous year's listening class enabled her to be promoted to the highest level class – Class 1. It was not until her fourth year, however, that Gigi really felt confident about her English language abilities. It was actually a single classroom event – a gestalt moment while delivering a speech in front of approximately fifty students – that Gigi claimed true confidence that she could speak English finally came to her. As she told me:

I participated in a class called English Speech – and then we finally had a chance to speak on a stage to talk about certain topics that teacher chose for us, and then it was at that moment I could speak in English, and I was feeling good because teacher gave me really good mark and she said, “You speak good and fluently.”

This speech was a significant challenge that Gigi performed expertly in, garnering much praise from her teacher, and giving her confidence in her English abilities that she still has to this day.

6.3 English Debate Society

Although Gigi's embrace of English media gave her English proficiency a tremendous boost over the course of her first and second year at Saint Agnes, she later found another way to better her English. During her third year, a friend

invited Gigi to join the school's English Debate Society, and for two years, she was an active participant in this school community. The group met twice a week, learning debating techniques from instructors as well as reading about and discussing current issues and international news stories that provided material to debate. During the summer and winter vacations, the English Debate Society also held workshops in which students from other schools around Taiwan came to learn debating skills and participate in debate tournaments. In this community, English use was not restricted to the debates themselves. English was actually used for almost all interaction among group members. Gigi attributed this to the fact that many members had lived abroad in English speaking environments, and were, therefore, quite comfortable speaking English for routine interaction – even with Taiwanese classmates. “It seems some people who have the experience studying overseas, they don't feel embarrassed,” she explained. The friend who invited Gigi to join the Debate Society was, in fact, one of the classmates whose English proficiency had intimidated her so during her first year at Saint Agnes. This friend, Vivian³⁷, had spent five years in England while her mother had been going to school there. At first, communicating in English with fellow Taiwanese students outside of class seemed quite strange to Gigi. Over time, however, she came to regard the practice as a normal one.

This English Debate Society was very much a CoP. Its members shared an interest in debating in English and got together regularly to learn how to become better at doing it. As is the case with any CoP, this one had its own ways of doing

³⁷ This and all other names of individuals mentioned in focal participants' stories are pseudonyms chosen by me, the focal participants, or the individuals themselves.

things that included the use of English despite the fact that the majority of its members could arguably express themselves better in Mandarin Chinese. According to Gigi, participation in this community increased her spoken English proficiency considerably – particularly winter and summer debate workshops, which required her to continuously use English for an entire week at a time. “I was really happy ‘cuz finally I could have the chance to talk naturally with the other classmates,” she told me. At the beginning of her fifth and final year at Saint Agnes though, Gigi realized her busy schedule did not permit her continued participation in this community, so she quit the English Debate Society after two years as an active member.

6.4 Foreign Friends

There are actually quite a few foreign students at Saint Agnes studying Mandarin Chinese at the college’s Chinese Language Center. Interaction between these students and Taiwanese students, however, tends to seldom occur due to both groups’ lack of confidence in their linguistic skills. As Gigi put it, “We didn’t have occasion to start a conversation with them, so it was quite difficult for us to go approaching them and talk, and also they kind of only communicate with the people studying at the Chinese Language Center.” Gigi, however, was lucky enough to meet two foreign students who proved to be exceptions to these on-campus interactional norms.

One such student was, Evelína, a girl from Czech who was taking Chinese classes at Saint Agnes. One afternoon when Gigi was sitting on campus reading,

Evelina approached her and struck up a conversation. The two ended up becoming good friends and spent a great deal of time together, all the while communicating in English even though Evelina was ostensibly in Taiwan to learn Chinese. It was also through a chance encounter that Gigi met another foreign friend, Nathalie, who was from Switzerland. Nathalie, also a student at the St. Agnes Chinese Language Center, came to sit in on a philosophy class and happened to take the seat next to Gigi, and they established an enduring friendship. Although Nathalie and Evelina (who did not know each other) later returned to their respective home countries, Gigi continued to maintain communication with both of them via the internet.

Computer-mediated contexts accounted for a great deal of Gigi's foreign language use. In her third year at Saint Agnes, when she first started to use the Skype program to meet and chat with foreigners online, Gigi didn't feel a need to go through such channels to use her English. She felt that the English Debate Society and face-to-face communication with foreign friends at Saint Agnes were providing her sufficient English practice at that time. It was instead French that Gigi sought to practice online.

Like everyone else in the E39A class who all shared the French minor, Gigi had had no experience with the language before her introductory French class at Saint Agnes. While some of her classmates struggled with French and swore they would never speak a word of it after completing their required French courses, Gigi's experience learning French was a positive one. Opportunities to practice one's French in Taiwan, however, are scant – far fewer than opportunities to use

English. Hence, Gigi turned to the internet and Skype to find French speakers to converse with.

At first, Gigi's experience communicating in French online was a pleasurable one. "I tried to search for people online to practice French with them," she recalled. "And that becomes a quite nice experience because you don't have to correct – to have 100% correct grammar... When I was in third year, I was quite crazy about that [Skype] – I used it every day." It didn't take too long, however, before Gigi's enthusiasm for being able to use her French without worrying about grammar mistakes was dampened by Skype users with less than noble intentions. "I no longer use it because there are some perverts who would write you," she told me with a laugh.

Before these perverts drove her away from Skype, Gigi actually did have quite a few English interactions in addition to those in French. One of these English interactions was with Amedeo, an Italian who would later become her boyfriend. "He was always really polite," she recalled. "He was a really strange person – special, I would say – because he wanted to know about Taiwanese culture, and that was really special because most of the time, the other people I met in the Skype, they wanted to talk about some very boring stuff... small talk, and I was really not interested, but he was the one that I thought he was really a person I can keep in touch with."

According to Gigi, neither her nor Amedeo harbored any romantic thoughts when they first met online. Gigi had a boyfriend in Taiwan at the time anyway. They continued to keep in touch though, and approximately a year after their first

online interaction, Gigi and her brother took a month-long trip to Europe in which they visited Switzerland, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, and Italy. When they arrived in Italy, Amedeo met Gigi and her brother at the airport and spent several hours showing them around his city on each of the five days of their stay there. At this point, Gigi and Amedeo's relationship remained a platonic one. "We didn't get together at the moment when I was in Europe," Gigi explained. "I came back to Taiwan. Then he wrote me email. Then we started to eh – have certain feelings, and we decided he would come to Taiwan again after one year." At the time of our May 2009 interview, Amedeo had come to Taiwan to see Gigi two times and each of these visits was a month long.

Almost all communication between Gigi and Amedeo has been in English. "He speaks quite good English, but has a strong accent," Gigi told me. Even before meeting Amedeo on Skype, however, Gigi had begun studying Italian. Her interest in Italian was sparked by seeing the movie *Death in Venice*, and upon seeing this movie, she instantly fell in love with the sound of Italian and decided to learn it on her own. It was shortly after this that she and Amedeo began communicating in English on Skype. Their interaction, however, continued to be predominantly in English even after Gigi's knowledge of Italian increased. "We are used to speaking English, so it's hard to change – to switch the language to Italian," she explained. "It's not natural, but sometimes I do – when I write him a message or email, I will use Italian." Although she suspected that he may just be trying to flatter her, Gigi said that Amedeo praised her efforts with Italian, telling her she was learning quickly. She acknowledged though that the Italian

communication he complimented had been subject to careful scrutiny before meeting his eyes. “When I write an e-mail in Italian, I do check the grammar and everything very carefully, so I think it doesn’t have too many mistakes,” she told me.

The chances Gigi and Amedeo had to be together face-to-face were infrequent, but they communicated with each other daily via e-mail and MSN instant messaging. Although this was entirely written English (or at least the written simulation of spoken English that characterizes much internet communication), it provided Gigi with regular practice using English that she would otherwise not have been getting since Evelina and Nathalie had both left Taiwan and her participation in the English Debate Society had ceased. On the written questionnaire, Gigi described English as “an important language I use everyday,” and it was her computer-mediated communication with Amedeo that constituted the vast majority of this everyday use when they were not together.

6.5 Facebook

Another internet locale where Gigi regularly used English (and occasionally French and Italian) at the time of our May 2009 interview was the Facebook social networking website. In contrast to her previous use of Skype to meet new foreign friends, Gigi’s Facebook community was composed of individuals she already knew – both foreign friends and her Taiwanese classmates. Somewhat surprisingly, English served as the main language of communication on Facebook for both of these groups. “It’s quite strange,” she told me, “because the

classmates from Saint Agnes, they all speak English on Facebook...it's strange because normally they don't speak English with me, but only on Facebook.”

When I asked whether she thought this was due to the fact that typing Chinese characters on the computer was rather cumbersome, she replied, “No, I think secretly they want to speak English.” These classmates’ use of English on Facebook was, of course, actually far from secret. It was visible to everyone on their Facebook friends list³⁸. What Gigi meant when she said that these classmates “secretly want to speak English” was that they secretly wished they could speak English to their classmates in face-to-face interactions, as members of the English Debate Society did, but lacked the confidence to do so or thought that doing so seemed entirely too strange. Facebook, however, provided them with an opportunity to use English and project their identities as English speakers in a manner that was less face-threatening than in-person communication. “Maybe they feel shy to speak in the normal days,” Gigi explained, “so they choose to type...everyone speaks English [on Facebook], so it seems more strange if you type Chinese.”

Gigi did use some Chinese in her Facebook interactions, but English was the main language she used there, not only with foreign friends like Nathalie, but also quite often with her Taiwanese classmates. The following, for example, is an excerpt from a Facebook mini-conversation Gigi had with a former Saint Agnes classmate:

³⁸ This would not be the case, however, with communication using the Facebook chat or mail functions. These chat and mail conversations would be viewable only by the two individuals involved in the interactions.

“Should have kept in touch becuz you almost forgot me :D how’ve u been lately?”³⁹”

In another mini-conversation commenting on a photo another former classmate had posted, Gigi responded to this friend’s self-depreciating comments about her own appearance in the photo by typing “don’t worry girl u look gorgeous!”

Although her use of French and Italian were far less frequent than English, Gigi did occasionally use both of these languages on Facebook as well. In an exchange with a former Saint Agnes teacher fluent in Italian, for instance, Gigi was also able to put her Italian to use. In response to the former teacher’s inquiry in Italian about whether she was in Italy or Taiwan, Gigi replied, “sono in taiwan per ora ma vado in italia in gennaio e non voglio pensare quanto freddo fa!” (I’m in Taiwan for the time being, but I’m going to Italy in January and don’t want to think about how cold it will be!). Just as Facebook provided an opportunity for Gigi and her Taiwanese classmates to project their identities as English speakers, it allowed Gigi to present her French and Italian speaking identities as well, showcasing her multilingual and multicultural self to all her Facebook friends.

6.6 Other Opportunities for Foreign Language Use While Attending Saint Agnes

In addition to the opportunities for foreign language use discussed above, Gigi also found a variety of other venues to practice her English and French throughout the five years she studied at Saint Agnes. Some of these were single instances of

³⁹ An additional Discourse is called upon here to simulate informal spoken communication – a Discourse Gigi and other participants have become quite proficient with, liberally using internet shorthand, such as “u” and emoticons, such as “:D”.

foreign language use, such as a time when she was called upon to translate for her cousin when a visiting foreigner couldn't speak Chinese. Other opportunities for foreign language use were more routine, extending for periods of weeks, months, or years.

The month-long trip to Europe that Gigi took with her brother during the summer between her third and fourth year at Saint Agnes provided her with a wealth of opportunities to employ her language skills. In addition to routine service interactions and English interactions with Amedeo and Nathalie (who she visited in Switzerland), she also used English in France with a friend of her mother's. Gigi's mother had met this friend, a man in his 60's, several years earlier on the internet, and he invited Gigi and her brother to stay at his house while they were in France. Although Gigi used English to speak with her mother's friend, his wife and other friends that she met through him did not have anywhere near the English proficiency that he did. Gigi was, therefore, forced to put her French to use. "With my mom's friend, we speak in English, but the other people, they don't speak English that well, so I try to speak my very strange French," she told me with a chuckle. Regardless of how strange her French might have been, it was apparently sufficient to establish some lasting friendships, for she has continued to keep in touch with several of these people she met through her mother's friend.

Volunteering to be an English tour guide twice a week at an art museum during the summer between her fourth and fifth year at Saint Agnes also gave Gigi additional practice with English and proved very rewarding. "I had to study

beforehand, but I could explain everything about the artworks to the visitors, and I think I was being quite helpful,” she told me. This position enabled her to use her language expertise to educate others about her emerging passion for art and design, providing foreign visitors with a far greater understanding of the exhibits than they would have gotten by relying only on the somewhat limited written English descriptions posted in the museum.

While such opportunities to display one’s English expertise outside the Saint Agnes campus in Taiwan are not abundant, there are certain places where foreigners congregate and the use of English among Taiwanese patrons is not necessarily viewed as showing off. One such place is a bar near the Saint Agnes campus that caters to a large number of foreigners – mostly Canadians. According to Gigi, this sort of establishment was becoming increasingly popular among Taiwanese. “There are lots of foreign customers there,” she told me. “And everybody – especially young people – they want to go to this kind of place. They want to go to an exotic place, I would say, that people there are foreigners and English speaking people, and then they feel like – they feel good.” Gigi herself enjoyed this sort of environment, and for awhile (before turning their attention to clubbing), she and her friends went there occasionally – “perhaps twice a month,” she estimated. She claimed that she did not go out of her way to speak English there though. “If I go with my friends, we still speak Chinese,” she reported, but “if the foreigners don’t speak Chinese, we speak English.”

Unlike many of the foreign bar patrons, Gigi’s mother, of course, spoke Chinese. The English practice sessions Gigi and her mother began having when

she was in junior high school nevertheless continued during her first year or so at Saint Agnes when Gigi went home on weekends or during school vacations. It was when they both realized that Gigi's English proficiency had surpassed that of her mother sometime during Gigi's second year at Saint Agnes that they finally ended these sessions and her mother began offering the same practice opportunities to Gigi's younger sister.

Finally, one additional opportunity for English use that Gigi reported taking advantage of daily at the time of our May 2009 interview was one in which it was her receptive reading skills that were put to use – reading news stories on English language websites. “Since I started to learn English better, I read the news online every day – on BBC, also CNN,” she informed me. Getting her news from these sources was not merely an attempt to sharpen her English reading skills, but a conscious attempt to shun the Chinese language media in Taiwan. “The reason I don't like to read Chinese [news] is because it's not objective,” she told me. In addition to believing that the BBC and CNN are less subjective than Taiwanese media outlets, Gigi told me that she would also rather avoid the gossip and politics that the Taiwanese media focused an inordinate amount of attention on. Taiwanese people, she contended, were “too passionate” about politics, and she preferred to keep her mouth shut and avoid any potential conflicts where politics are concerned. By relying on the BBC and CNN to stay informed rather than the local media, she was able to avoid all the squabbling so endemic of Taiwanese politics, and in doing so, maintain a sense of international superiority – a feeling of being above the fray of local politics.

6.7 Anticipating a Career in Design

Unlike many of her classmates who were still unclear about what kind of work they would like to do in the future, Gigi found her passion in art and design. Toward the end of her elementary school years, she had attended painting classes at a cram school specializing in art, and although she greatly enjoyed these classes, they only lasted a few months, abruptly ending when she was sent to the prep school for junior high. In the years that followed, she continued to maintain an interest in art, painting on her own whenever she had the time, but her artistic endeavors were forced to take a backseat to language studies when she enrolled at Saint Agnes. Gigi never lost her artistic aspirations and around her third year at Saint Agnes, she found herself considering fashion design as a career option. This idea was soon abandoned, however, when her brother sparked her interest in industrial design⁴⁰ – something he was himself interested in pursuing at that time. “I didn’t know what industrial design is before,” she told me. “He was telling me and my parents that he was applying for industrial design in any of the universities in Taiwan.”

From that point on, Gigi single-mindedly focused on the goal of a career in industrial design. In her fifth-year research writing class, where students are required to write a research paper of substantial length in English, Gigi chose the topic of eco-design and, hence, has become quite knowledgeable on this topic. Throughout her fifth year, she also took design classes at a cram school. Having had almost no formal design training, these classes, she hoped, would provide her

⁴⁰ *Industrial design* is the industry term used to refer to product design.

with sufficient knowledge of the field to gain admission to a university design program – preferably one at a prestigious national university.

Just as she had been intimidated by classmates with higher English proficiency when she first started studying at Saint Agnes, Gigi found herself discouraged by the superior artistic skills of her classmates in the cram school design classes. “I never received the kind of academic training – painting skill, so there are still lots of people whose painting is better than me,” she told me. “I saw the other people’s works, and they are really good... Teachers say, ‘You did good too,’ but it doesn’t sound really positive to me.” She acknowledged that painting skills do not necessarily correlate with chances for success as a designer with the statement, “Being a designer, you need creativity rather than painting skill.” Although she thought she might have the necessary creativity, she wasn’t entirely sure about this either. “I want some proof,” she told me.

At the time of our first interview in May of 2009, Gigi was planning to apply at eight different Taiwanese universities that had design programs that interested her. This would require that she take eight different entrance exams the following July. Since each of these universities’ design programs would only be accepting a few applicants, competition was sure to be fierce, and Gigi was not at all optimistic about her chances of gaining admission to any of them. She therefore had a back-up plan. A few weeks before our interview, Gigi had taken the two-year college entrance exam and had done amazingly well, achieving a score high enough to land her a spot in the English department at the second most prestigious institute of technology in Taiwan. If this were to be her course of action, she had no

intention of abandoning her design ambitions though. “After that, I could still go to Italy to study [design] there... There’s also a school in France,” she told me.

Although both her parents thought Gigi should continue to study language rather than design, they were cautiously supportive. “They didn’t say no to my dream,” she reported. “They’re being quite supportive to me.” To Gigi, continuing to focus exclusively on language without developing any other marketable skills, as her parents thought she should do, was not a realistic option in today’s labor market. “Maybe before – ten years or twenty years ago – that worked,” she told me. “Lots of the teachers at Saint Agnes and many people I know, they majored in English teaching, and then when they came back to Taiwan, they could find a job in a university or college, but right now, it seems every university, they all want Ph.D., so it’s quite difficult since I don’t plan to study Ph.D.” A high level of English proficiency alone, Gigi believed, would not suffice. As she put it, “there are still more people that can speak better than you, so I think I can never be top – the best – so I still search for the other interests for me – for myself.”

Since she planned to apply for admission to eight different design programs, Gigi, at the time of our first interview, faced the prospect of possibly having several university interviews as part of the applicant selection process. She had given herself a 3 (out of 5) on the written questionnaire’s boldness scale and described herself as “an introverted person,” but insisted that, in an interview situation, she would do her best to promote herself and her abilities with confidence. When I asked if that might be risky, given the traditional value

placed on modesty in Taiwanese society, she replied, “No...traditionally it’s being modest, but right now, you have to be confident.” She attributed this belief largely to her father’s experiences at his workplace. “My dad...he has quite a similar personality to me,” she reported. “He’s kind of shy. And he told me his experience. It’s not a good thing to be shy and modest. It’s better to try to promote yourself and speak about what you can do...even you can try to be kind of exaggerating.” According to Gigi, her father felt he has lost out on advancement and pay increases purely because of his inability to promote his abilities. Recalling his situation, she told me, “He’s an engineer and he said he works hard every day and he knows lots of technology and he has quite good skill, but he feels he doesn’t have so many chances to earn the money...than the other people who speak – who are exaggerating, and he says it’s better you have a mouth to speak rather than good skill.”

Gigi cited instances in the past where she herself had lost out on opportunities due to her introverted personality. “Some of my classmates, they tried to have the chance of being translators during the World Games, but I was kind of shy and I said, ‘Oh no – not me,’” she recalled. “And lots of events, I was having this kind of attitude. I think that is not good, and I try to be more brave and um – like take initiative to do things...I still want to keep my personality. I don’t want to make too much change, but things to survive in this world – you have to do some things which is against your will.” These comments illustrate Gigi’s willingness to take full responsibility for her own success and show her commitment to a personal self-development project that involves an increase in her boldness and willingness

to take risks, since she believed inadequacies in these areas had, in the past, constrained her access to valuable opportunities. She told me that she thought she had already made much progress with this self-development project, and for this she credited a Saint Agnes marketing class in which she and her classmates got a lot of practice with promotion. “Teacher said we have to sound aggressive when we are promoting our things,” she told me. “So I think that right now, if there’s an interview, I could sound confident without any problem.”

When I asked her in our May 2009 interview about what she envisioned for herself in the future in ten or fifteen years, Gigi reported a vision that was perfectly clear only where her future profession was concerned. “Of course being a designer,” she declared. “I think I will have a personal studio and I will work at home or maybe working for some company.” The location in which she imagined herself plying her trade, however, was far less specific. On the written questionnaire, she wrote that she eventually wanted to work in Italy, but in our interview, she indicated that the United States or elsewhere in Europe could be desirable as well. “I think I want to have some working experience overseas,” she told me. “But I think I will end up coming back to Taiwan.”

Even if she were to return to Taiwan and work as a designer there, Gigi reported that her use of Tai-yu would seldom, if ever, play any role in her future professional career since she would not be involved in any way with public relations or direct sales to the public. Her Tai-yu use, she maintained, would remain pretty much as it was at that time – mostly restricted to family members and others in her rural hometown, such as former elementary school classmates.

On the written questionnaire, Gigi listed Chinese, Taiyu, English, French, and Italian – all the languages in her linguistic repertoire – as the languages she envisioned herself using ten years later. The amount she would use each of these languages relative to each other would depend entirely, she told me, on where she ended up living.

6.8 The Place of Italian, French, and English in Gigi's Life as of May 2009

On the written questionnaire, Gigi characterized Italian as “the language I love the most” and she added “never get tired of studying it.” In our May 2009 interview, she acknowledged that her passion had shifted from English and French to Italian, and informed me, “I spend more time studying Italian than English and French.” Since all her Italian study had been done on her own, a high degree of passion was certainly necessary to achieve any degree of proficiency. Commenting on this self-study, she remarked on her written questionnaire, “It’s a very entertaining n’ stressless experience to learn a language by myself.” When she rated her Italian proficiency on the written questionnaire, she gave herself all 2’s for Italian listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Two’s on this scale of 1 to 5 would, I suppose, be roughly equivalent to an advanced beginner or low intermediate level – actually quite a feat for an entirely self-taught language. Since Italian is far from a commonly learned language in Taiwan, the level of proficiency she attained in the language did serve to distinguish her from others there, and her occasional use of Italian on Facebook, did, as mentioned earlier,

serve to project her identity as an Italian speaker (or an Italian learner, at any rate) to her Facebook friends.

Even though Gigi generally spoke English to Amedeo rather than Italian, being in a long-term relationship with an Italian, I believe, couldn't help but reinforce her affiliation with the Italian language. It's not an inheritance link, but one that is potentially even more powerful since her relationships with Amedeo and the Italian language were, unlike those with parents and languages learned from birth, the result of conscious choice rather than circumstance. When I discussed this assessment with Gigi, she agreed, acknowledging that she did feel a special connection with the Italian language as a result of her relationship with Amedeo. While she reported enjoying the study of French, had a positive attitude about the language, and believed she would likely continue to use it in the future, she did not appear to have anywhere near the close affiliation with French that she did with Italian. This could largely be due to the fact that her relationships with French speakers hadn't been nearly as close as her relationship was with Amedeo. On the written questionnaire, Gigi described French as a "very interesting language which helps me to broaden my horizon" – certainly a positive evaluation, but completely lacking any of the passion with which she discussed Italian.

Broadening horizons was the main role that Gigi granted English as well. For Gigi, her proficiency in English helped her to feel like a truly international person with a broad worldview. This feeling was reinforced not only by her interactions with people from different countries in English, but also in Taiwan when she got news stories and other information from English websites. It was not surprising

then that in our May 2009 interview, Gigi expressed agreement with the Taiwanese government's message that acquiring English is a necessary first step to internationalization. "I think it will help," she said. "Taiwanese people used to be very ignorant...I think there's still some education needed." A facility with English, she felt, could only help Taiwanese become more aware of and interact with the world outside their island's borders. "I ask lots of my friends, 'Where's Milan?' and they don't know where it is. They think it is a country," she told me as an example of how unknowledgeable Taiwanese still tend to be about the world. "So I think learning English could have some help."

Gigi also stressed that she saw English as being highly beneficial not only in permitting an increased awareness of the outside world, but also in allowing people in Taiwan and elsewhere an increased capacity to have their voices heard outside their localities. To illustrate this, she brought up the then recent incident in Tibet where the Chinese government used force to quell demonstrations. "There were lots of the Chinese students. They went to YouTube, and they [said] 'Oh, it's not the Chinese government's fault' and they try to defend for themselves," she told me. "English is the way that helps them to speak out their opinions to the foreigners...Otherwise they would just be speaking internally – domestically."

6.9 After Saint Agnes Graduation

Instead of applying to eight different universities as she told me she intended to do when we conducted our first interview, Gigi ended up only applying to two – and only one of these two schools had a design program. The problem, she told

me, was that all the schools with design programs held their entrance exams for transfer students on the same day. She was, therefore, forced to pick just one of these schools and place all her hopes on getting accepted into that one program. The school she chose was a national university that didn't have an industrial design program at all, but instead a program in interior design. "Some universities, they had only a few vacancies for my department – for the Department of Design," she explained. "So I chose the one that had more vacancies." This interior design program, in fact, only had four vacancies, but chances of being one of the four accepted there were considerably higher than at the schools with industrial design programs. The school, for example, that was her top choice – a university renowned for its industrial design program – only had two places available.

On a whim, Gigi also took the entrance exam for admittance to an Italian program at a private university in Taipei County that, like Saint Agnes, was famous for foreign language instruction. "Probably I was a little mad at the moment to think maybe I could continue my study in Italian if I go to that school," she told me. Gigi's entrance exam for this Italian program consisted of two parts – one was English and Chinese, tested together on the same exam paper, and the other was Italian. Despite the fact that she had never had any formal Italian instruction, Gigi performed astonishingly well on the exam's Italian section – even better than on the English/Chinese portion. "Italian, I got 94 [out of 100]," she told me. "But English and Chinese – I'm sure the English part I did pretty well because I knew that was pretty easy, but Chinese was sort of difficult

for me because the questions were mostly about Chinese literature that were difficult...old classical stuff.” She couldn’t have done too badly with the Chinese literature questions though, for Gigi’s combined score was high enough to secure one of the five Italian department vacancies. This alone would have been quite a feat, but Gigi’s score was actually the highest out of the 30 or so students who took the exam! “That I knew because it is written – your ranking,” she informed me. “I was the number one!” I was flabbergasted when she relayed this information to me, and while Gigi was herself surprised by these results, she downplayed the magnitude of this achievement, telling me that the students she was competing against could not have been very proficient in Italian. “All of those students were not Italian majors,” she said. “It’s the only school that has Italian department in Taiwan.”

For the interior design program at the national university that Gigi also applied for, there were 84 students vying for the four department vacancies, so she was dealing with far greater odds than in the Italian program with 30 students competing for five spaces. “I thought I would fail,” she told me. “They had exams in three subjects...Chinese, and English, and Design – Basic Fundamental Design. And I received my grade card...my Chinese and Design were both 50-something [out of 100], which is not that good...There were specific questions – some things I’ve never learned, which is about the interior design field that I didn’t study before.” It was actually a 59 that Gigi scored for the Design portion of the entrance exam – not at all bad really, considering the fact that her design background consisted solely of a year of cram school classes. This score of 59,

however, surely paled in comparison to those of many of her competitors, some of whom were attempting to transfer from design departments of other universities. In the end though, Gigi's score of 85 on the English portion of the exam compensated for the far weaker Chinese and Design scores, putting her ahead of 81 other students and securing her the last of the four department vacancies. "I was the last one!" she informed me. "The fourth – the last student picked...I think English really helped me a lot!"

So Gigi was accepted at both of the two schools she attempted to gain admittance to⁴¹. She had her choice of two programs – one interior design and the other Italian. And despite her passion for the Italian language, her love of design took precedence. "I wanted to learn design, so I have to," she explained. Another consideration was the fact that, in Taiwan, national universities are considered far more prestigious than private universities. Gigi's parents were, therefore, overjoyed that she had been accepted at the national university and were strongly encouraging her to attend this school. "When I told my dad I'm going to the exams of this university, he was saying, 'Oh, that's quite impossible,'" she told me with a laugh. "And I made it, so...they were really surprised!"

Gigi's parents were not the only ones that were surprised by her acceptance at a prestigious national university. As news of her admission spread throughout her hometown, Gigi found, much to her embarrassment, that she was suddenly

⁴¹ Unlike some Taiwanese universities that also conduct entrance interviews, admission at these two schools was determined entirely by the entrance examinations. Gigi will, therefore, have to wait for future interviews to see to what extent she is able to confidently promote herself and her abilities in an interview setting.

regarded as a sort of town hero. The mayor of the town even wrote a congratulatory card and stuck it to the gate of her family's house. "My town is, like, a really traditional and old place," she explained. "It's in the countryside, so there were not so many children that can have this possibility of going to this university in Taipei." All of Gigi's relatives also gave her money – money that she didn't really feel good about accepting. "I wanted to tell them, 'I'm still not sure if I could finish my course at the university, and now you're giving me the money!'" she said.

All this adulation has thrust a great deal of pressure onto Gigi, making her feel that she absolutely must successfully complete her course of study, for if she fails to do so, she would not just be letting down her family, but also her entire hometown. This pressure weighed heavily on her during her first semester in the interior design program as she struggled with required calculus and physics courses – the sort of classes she had sought to avoid five years earlier by attending Saint Agnes. She characterized her experience with these classes her first semester as "dreadful" and went on to describe her thoughts at the time:

Last semester, I was thinking, "Oh, I'm going to drop the school."

And I told all my friends that I don't wanna be here anymore. But

I couldn't tell my parents. I couldn't tell my relatives because they think I'm the hero.

Luckily, Gigi did manage to pass both calculus and physics that first semester. One more semester of each of these courses was still required of her at the time of our March 2010 interview, but by then, she felt more confident that she could

successfully pass them and was no longer considering dropping out of the program. “I have to take, but I think now I know how to pass it,” she declared. Classmates, she told me, had provided her with some useful strategies that had proven quite helpful in achieving passing grades on the exams. She certainly hadn’t gained any newfound appreciation for calculus and physics though. Nor had she seen any evidence that these courses would help her in her design endeavors. “They think it’s really necessary to learn calculus and physics if you want to learn design, but I don’t think so,” she said. “I haven’t found it useful.”

Although Gigi’s university experience had been dampened by the calculus and physics requirements, she spoke with intense enthusiasm for her program’s design courses. “It’s great!” she told me excitedly. “Now I’m having one which is called *Space Design*, and we have to do paper models, and sometimes, when I finish it, I find it’s probably already 4 a.m. in the morning!” When I asked her if she still had doubts about her creativity, she told me she did. “I haven’t really done a serious project like those shown in the design exhibition by the design major students,” she explained. “And that really makes me feel anxious about myself. I keep wondering is it only because the current program in school hasn’t brought me to that level or I simply could not have done something like that.” She had nothing but praise though for her design instructors and their efforts to encourage the creativity she so desperately wished to cultivate. “The teacher doesn’t give us so clear indication about what to do,” she told me. “They want us to be more creative – in the first year especially.” Recognizing that interior design is actually much more suited to her interests and abilities than industrial

design, she has now abandoned her previous aspiration of getting into industrial design. “Industrial design requires much more knowledges in technology,” she explained.

Gigi’s parents continued to be cautiously supportive of her dream of becoming a designer. They were particularly impressed by the determination she had shown in pursuit of this dream. “Once I got older, I probably expressed myself pretty well when I want to do anything,” she told me. “So my parents would think that once you get these ideas of doing something, just do it. That’s better than not having any idea and not knowing what to do.” Gigi’s university is especially known for training teachers and she does have the option of taking courses specially designed for those intending to teach interior design in Taiwan’s technical high schools. This is the route her parents would like her to take. “Of course my parents want me to be a teacher,” she informed me⁴².

Gigi, however, had no intention of teaching design immediately after graduating. “From my personal experience back in the school – in college, if there is a teacher that immediately, once he graduated from university, he immediately goes to teach the students, I always found that’s really bad,” she told me. “He may lack the experience, and probably too academic...If you want to

⁴² For anyone unfamiliar with Taiwanese society, the “of course” in Gigi’s statement is perhaps in need of some explanation. As in most Asian societies, teachers are highly respected in Taiwan. Unlike in some other countries, however, the teachers in Taiwan’s public schools are, in fact, compensated in accordance to the respect the society grants them. Teachers’ salaries are generally quite high and their extraordinary pension plans allow them to retire quite young – in their 50’s – and receive a monthly pension check even higher than the monthly salaries they received when they were working. Public school teachers in Taiwan even receive discounts on their utility bills. In recent years, however, declining birthrates in Taiwan have resulted in a drastic reduction in the number of teachers hired, and competition for the coveted teaching positions has become unbelievably fierce. Training to be a public school teacher in Taiwan today is, therefore, a rather risky undertaking.

teach design, but you don't have any experience in doing design, that is bad.”

Gigi wasn't completely ruling out the possibility of teaching design later in her career though – after gaining some practical experience. “If I want to teach, I want to teach in a college or university,” she said. Teaching interior design at the tertiary level would, of course, likely require that she obtain a Ph.D. – something she wasn't considering at all when we discussed the subject at our first interview. Ten months later, however, she was considering the idea. The paper on eco-design that she had written in English for her research writing class during her last year at Saint Agnes had drawn much praise from her teacher, and as a result, she had gained a great deal of confidence in her writing and research abilities. “My teacher said that was good, so I think I can get Ph.D...I don't know. Maybe,” she told me.

6.10 Opportunities for Foreign Language Use after Saint Agnes Graduation

After she graduated from Saint Agnes, Gigi's primary use of English continued to be communication with Amedeo. Other opportunities for her to use the language in her Taipei university environment were not plentiful. “Here in Taipei, probably because of my major, I don't speak English that much as I used to do in Saint Agnes,” she told me. “So I feel my English is going bad.” The only regular opportunity she had to communicate in English on campus was with foreign students in one of her classes. “Sometimes I get the chance to talk with foreign students – classmates in a certain class,” she reported. “But they were not in my department. We were probably having only the same lesson once a week. So I

am kind of shy, so I don't take initiative to talk with them that much. They would...if he or she sits next to me.”

6.10.1 Teaching English

Gigi also taught English to children at a Taipei cram school for two months. She had, in fact, just quit this job at the time of our interview in March of 2010. “I wouldn't call it using English,” she said. “The children have really low English knowledge, so I teach them mostly grammar... You go to the cram school that tells you, ‘We all speak English in the cram school with the children,’ but that's not possible – at least in my case, that's not possible. I would try to speak English with my students, but they would still respond in Chinese.” Although the main reason Gigi quit this teaching job was she was too busy with her own schoolwork, she had another reason for not wanting to continue teaching. She found that she could no longer, in good conscience, conduct English lessons focusing on grammar with no use of the language for actual communication. This, in her opinion, was not how languages should be learned, and she didn't feel right about engaging in a teaching practice that she so vigorously opposed. “I think if I have children, I wouldn't send them to cram school,” she told me. “But it also depends on what kind of lessons are provided in the cram school. If they do create environments that all the students have to speak to communicate, but not teaching grammar and reading – the things I do right now. That's what I was doing, so I told myself I couldn't do this thing anymore. I would feel guilty in the future.”

6.10.2 Communication with Amedeo, his Family, and his Friends

Amedeo's first two trips to Taiwan had each been for only one month. "If you come to Taiwan for one month – thirty days, you don't need to apply visa," Gigi explained. "So he always stayed the maximum." For his visit during the summer between Gigi's graduation from Saint Agnes and the commencement of her studies at the university in Taipei, however, the two of them took a short trip to Hong Kong after one month, which allowed him another month stay in Taiwan upon return. Amedeo had come to Taiwan this time with the intention of finding a job and staying there. He was able to find employment giving guitar lessons at a music school in Taipei, but the music school was unwilling to sponsor him for a work visa. During these two months then, Amedeo and Gigi rented a small apartment in Taipei County on a short-term basis and sent out lots of resumes to businesses that they thought might hire him and supply a work visa. These efforts proved unsuccessful though, so Amedeo returned to Italy just before Gigi started school and moved into the school dormitory.

After Amedeo returned to Italy, he and Gigi continued to maintain daily internet communication until Gigi, after her first semester at the university, went to Italy during her winter break. Unlike her first trip to Europe, when she visited five different countries, Gigi's second trip in February of 2010 was limited to visiting Amedeo in Italy. Although her communication with him continued to be primarily in English, her Italian was, at this point, far better than it had been during the first trip three and a half years earlier, and she was able to use Italian with Amedeo's family members and engage in service encounters. "With his

mom and his grandma, I have to speak Italian,” she told me. “And also, if I am alone and go out to buy coffee or something, I have to speak Italian.” She was pleasantly surprised on this trip, to find that many hours of listening to Italian radio programs in Taiwan (via the internet) had paid off, and her Italian listening skills had become quite good. “Mostly I could understand,” she reported. “I think my listening is better than my speaking because here in Taiwan I have no chance to speak, but I listen a lot, so I could understand what they were speaking.” Her Italian speaking skills, she found, were sufficient for most casual conversations, but she did occasionally need Amedeo’s help to translate from English to Italian. “If I have to express much more difficult ideas, I have to ask Amedeo to translate,” she told me.

On this second trip to Italy, Gigi also had the opportunity to engage in lengthy discussions with several of Amedeo’s friends. “Also I met, like, some of Amedeo’s friends, who are also very interesting people,” she said. “We talked about literature. Also music – musicology – and they were all speaking pretty interesting stuff with me.” Since most of Amedeo’s friends were quite proficient in English, Gigi was not restricted to Italian use for these conversations and could use English to express more complicated ideas that gave her problems in Italian. After returning to Taiwan, she continued to keep in touch with one of these friends via Facebook, and their Facebook conversations have tended to be mostly in English. “I chat with him sometimes on Facebook, and he speaks – he writes – better than I do,” she told me.

6.10.3 English Online Media

In our March 2010 interview, Gigi also told me that she was no longer reading English news websites every day as she had been when I talked to her ten months earlier. Her previous practice of regularly keeping up with news stories via the BBC and CNN, she told me, was probably a habit she had retained from her days in the English Debate Society, and as her interest in debate waned, so too had the feeling that she needed to keep herself informed about world events. Gigi had not abandoned her use of English online media though. “If I want to search any information which I want to know, I will search in English,” she said. “I could do it in Chinese, but I don’t know why. Maybe because if I know how to speak about these things in English, I could talk with my boyfriend...Or maybe if I know English, I would know how to speak in Chinese, but if I know the Chinese, it would be a little bit difficult for me to speak in English.” Both of these explanations, to me, seem valid. The person with whom she would be most likely to discuss any newfound bit of information would be Amedeo, and since that conversation would be in English, acquiring the information in English would equip Gigi with the necessary English terminology. In most cases, she claimed, she would already know the Chinese terminology for the same concepts if she wanted to later discuss a topic with her family or other Chinese speakers.

6.11 Updated Vision of the Future

When we met in March of 2010, Gigi’s image of herself as a designer in the distant future remained unchanged except that the type of design had changed

from industrial design to interior design. Although she wasn't ruling out the possibility of someday working in France or the United States, it was a future in Italy that was then playing most vividly in her imagination. "I changed my visions," she remarked. "My life will probably be in Italy." She also acknowledged that her imagined future in Italy and a community of Italian speakers there (not entirely an imagined community since she already knows many of them) provided her with extra motivation and a sense of urgency in learning Italian. "The reason that I want to instantly progress in my Italian would probably be I want to move to Italy and live with him [Amedeo], or one day we'll be married...and also speak with his family and friends," she told me. "I always had this passion for Italian, but it just probably motivates me more."

Gigi's updated image of the future also did not necessarily include the idea of returning to Taiwan after obtaining some work experience abroad. Although she acknowledged that missing her family could very well force her to return, Taiwan, she explained, would not provide adequate opportunity for her to express her creativity as a designer:

I don't want to envision myself becoming an interior designer in Taiwan because what I saw is the people work in the design studio, they don't have the chance to express their creativity because they have to follow what customers ask them to do. And what customers want are mostly the things that are already done by other people. They want you to make a copy of that.

Europe, Gigi believed, would offer far greater freedom to express her creativity and develop her own distinct style as an interior designer than Taiwan, where her entrepreneurial self “strivings for autonomy, creativity and responsibility” (Miller & Rose, 1990: 27) would, she thought, surely be constrained. “And also, I will probably find much more interesting people – interested in design,” she added with a laugh.

6.12 English as a “Door to the World”

In an email message sent immediately after returning from her second trip to Europe in February of 2010, Gigi told me, “I feel very much benefited because I can speak English. I can say acquiring English is definitely a door to the world.” Elaborating on the notion of English providing her with “a door to the world,” she told me in our interview a month later that conversations she had had in English with Amedeo, Nathalie, Evelina, and others had enabled her to view many issues in a completely different light and prompted her to critically evaluate many Taiwanese societal norms and attitudes she had previously accepted unquestioningly. One such attitude was the one she had held toward communism, which is a truly dirty word in Taiwanese society due to the long history of contemptuous relations between Taiwan and Mainland China. From discussing communism with Amedeo and his friends in Italy, she found that, for them, it had very different – often positive – connotations.

The casting of aspersions onto musicians and artists as a result of their drug use is another topic Gigi debated with Amedeo – a debate that led her to rethink her attitudes on the issue:

I had so much conflict with my boyfriend about our opinions of people who have drugs. Like I always told him if he had drugs – if he happens to be a musician, if we found out he had drugs, we would – I don't want to listen to his music anymore. I told him so. Before, I thought so – from moral aspect. And he explained, “No, you should separate these two things – like morality and one's artist talent... So right now, I start to think probably it's just because of this Chinese tradition that one person, if he has any records in drugs or affairs, then we start to punish him – start to attack him – with the regard of our moral ideas, like social norms, but really I think it's not necessary.

According to Gigi, conversations such as the one described above have been invaluable in providing her with an understanding of the world that would have otherwise been unobtainable for her. “If I have to read a book about maybe existentialism, probably it would take me days and I probably wouldn't understand what it's talking about,” she explained. “But with someone who I can talk with – who I can have a certain discussion of the issue – that helps me to think and to understand.”

With Amedeo almost always on hand to explain or discuss any situation she encountered, Gigi's second trip to Europe seemed to have been an especially eye opening experience for her, and when I met with her about a month after her

return to Taiwan, she was eager to tell me all about her recent societal observations. One such observation contrasted the importance Asian societies place on the Confucian notion of filial piety with its relative lack of importance in European societies. Another comparative cultural observation involved the very different work ethics in Asia and Europe. The observation of widespread apathy in Italy and subsequent discussions with Amedeo also brought about in Gigi a newfound appreciation for dissent in Taiwanese society. In our first interview, she had expressed great distaste for the chaos of Taiwanese politics, but after returning from her second European trip, Gigi had come to hold a different view. “After all, I understand it should be [full of dissent],” she declared. “If the country looks like a fully peaceful place – like when you go to China, you wouldn’t see people speak bad about its own country – then there’s other problems. There’s big problems.”

Acknowledging the huge impact her recent trip to Italy and her interaction with Amedeo and his friends had had on her worldview, Gigi told me that she thought she had really changed as a person. With these changes and her own increased knowledge of the world came a change in the way she viewed her friends and acquaintances in Taiwan. When she was telling me about the interesting and often philosophical conversations she had with Amedeo and his friends, she contrasted these discussions with conversations in Taiwan that she characterized as superficial, “where people will talk, like, ‘Okay, let’s go shopping this afternoon.’” Most Taiwanese people, Gigi felt, were followers, blindly doing and expressing interest in whatever happens to be popular at any given time.

Admitting that she was herself the same way not long ago, she told me, “When I was in Saint Agnes, I also do the things like everybody does – like go to a movie – to watch the movie where everybody says, ‘Oh, you have to go to watch,’ and I go...but I changed.” Gigi thus saw her travels and conversations with Amedeo and other foreigners as invaluable to her self-development project, and English as playing a key role in her personal transformation.

6.13 Cultural Associations with English and Italian

Because of her personal experiences using English with people from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds that happened not to have been from traditionally English speaking countries, Gigi did not strongly associate English with the cultures of such countries. This relative lack of cultural associations for English contrasts sharply with the cultural connections she made with Italian. In the following comments from our March 2010 interview, for example, Gigi explicitly associated the Italian language with the animated style of speaking that is typical of Italians and, in her view, reflects the Italian mindset and way of life:

I like Italian also because I like the way that people think – like Italians have lots of the hand gestures and that puts me to think about the way that they are living...Like uh, for example, there’s a musician. He’s from Naples. Once he had the interview in Italian, and it was strange. I could understand perfectly what he was saying, and then I saw he has lots of the hand gestures, and then the way he speaks is, like, really Italian way, I would say. And then that

leads me to think about his background and how, like, the way people talk to each other. I think I like it.

For Gigi, English lacked such cultural associations. In an email to me, she wrote, “Reflecting on my own experience, I just realized I didn’t have this much experience of associating with native English speakers and it didn’t happen many occasions in my life at which I could meet or to be acquainted with them.” She told me in our March 2010 interview, in fact, that even if she were inclined to make cultural associations with English, she wouldn’t really know what images to associate the language with. “American culture seems a little bit unfamiliar for me,” she remarked. “I don’t know much about that. I’ve never been to the States.” Had she had more significant interactions with Canadians or Americans, Gigi might have stronger cultural associations, but the experiences she had had communicating with people from various European countries in English, both in Europe and Taiwan, had brought her to view English as “a door to the world” rather than a door to just a handful of Anglo cultures.

6.14 Ownership of English

Having reached a level of proficiency that enabled her to participate in an imagined global community of English speakers, Gigi raised the bar regarding her goals for her English development. No longer content to simply be able to communicate, she told me she wanted to fine-tune this communication, focusing on the manner in which she expresses herself – to achieve control over the self that she projects in English. As she explained it, “When my English is capable to

communicate, I become more cautious about what I speak because my language presents who I am.” For Gigi, it will only be after she feels she can eloquently express herself in discussions on a wide variety of topics that she will be able to claim any sort of ownership in the English language. “I still couldn’t fully express what I want to say in English, or maybe speaking the way I want to, so I still wouldn’t claim ownership,” she told me in our March 2010 interview. “And there’s still certain topics which I couldn’t, like, speak in English – like if you want me to talk about politics or economics, I would sound, like, somewhat stupid if I have to speak in English.” When I reminded her that she did, in fact, routinely discuss topics related to politics and economics with Amedeo, she replied, “Yeah, yeah, but mostly we speak in a pretty easy way. We try to make lots of examples, and he tries to explain what he thinks in very easy English.”

6.15 Mandarin Chinese and Tai-yu Attrition

Gigi’s desire for more eloquent communication was not restricted to English though, for she also recognized deficiencies in her Mandarin Chinese when doing formal in-class presentations. “When I speak with friends, no problem, but if I want to present my ideas in Chinese – Chinese presentation, I could sense there’s something wrong, and sometimes I couldn’t link all the things I want to say perfectly,” she admitted. “I have some structure problems.” She thought other Chinese language skills might be slipping as well, telling me, “Also I start to forget how to write Chinese words.” Gigi did not attribute these instances of Chinese slippage to the amount of time she had been spending learning and using

English and Italian. She instead blamed a simple lack of use over the course of her Saint Agnes education. “It’s probably because during these five years in Saint Agnes, we didn’t really need to write Chinese except in a few lessons,” she mused. “And even if we did, we always type.” She didn’t seem overly concerned about attrition in her Chinese though, telling me “It doesn’t bother me when I notice I have these problems because I know I could pick it up again once I start to write and pay more attention.”

Gigi also felt that she was experiencing some attrition with her Tai-yu – again, simply due to lack of use. “I’ve found the level of my Tai-yu is going down because I’ve been a really long time not speaking Tai-yu,” she told me. Even when she was living in Southern Taiwan and attending Saint Agnes, Gigi was not using her Tai-yu with great frequency – only with her family and other residents of her hometown. Moving to Taipei meant fewer visits to her hometown, and Taipei, unlike cities in Southern Taiwan, offers very little Tai-yu exposure. A higher concentration of residents with Mainlander origins accounts largely for this lack of Tai-yu use, but Gigi pointed out that it is also common for Taiwanese of her generation in Taipei to never learn Tai-yu. “Some of my classmates, their parents are both Taiwanese, but they don’t speak,” she remarked. “They don’t speak any Tai-yu.”

Gigi’s rustiness with Tai-yu was apparently quite noticeable, for she reported one instance of her Tai-yu deficiencies being pointed out by a relative. “Once when I went back home, I was speaking with some family member,” she recalled. “And maybe he heard I had some accent or maybe I spoke something wrong, and

then he tried to correct me and said, ‘Oh, are you Chinese?’” Asking if Gigi was Chinese, or someone of Mainlander origin, was, of course, intended to be jokingly insulting. This relative was perhaps concerned that Gigi’s Tai-yu was being negatively influenced by the Mainlanders in Taipei. “I don’t care that much though,” Gigi told me. Neither these sorts of comments by family members, nor her slight loss of Tai-yu proficiency, she claimed, were cause for much concern. She asserted, however, that she does, in fact, value Tai-yu and considered it an important part of her identity. She went on to tell me that she would feel a big loss if her future children were not able to speak Tai-yu and that she would make a point of speaking Tai-yu to them.

6.16 Conclusion to Gigi’s Story

Throughout much of her life, Gigi’s English abilities have served to make her feel special, differentiating her from peers with lower proficiency in the language, and at those points where this was not the case, she made a great deal of direct investment in the English language so as to reclaim that valued *good at English* component of her identity. She also invested heavily in various communities, such as the English Debate Society and communities of foreign friends (most notably Amedeo), with increased English proficiency coming about as a by-product of these investments.

Gigi did not experience great shifts in her language affiliations throughout the course of this year-long study, but her image of herself as an international person with a broad worldview was substantially strengthened during this time period –

especially by her experiences and discussions in Italy. This newly strengthened international identity served to again allow her to differentiate herself from her peers in Taiwan, who she regarded as generally lacking an international perspective. Since she credited English for making all her worldly knowledge gains possible, we can again see Gigi's English language abilities providing her with a means to feel special and different from those she interacts with on a regular basis in Taiwan.

During the course of the study, Gigi did seem to have experienced a slight increase in the strength of her affiliation with the Italian language. With each Italian conversation she successfully took part in while in Italy, or even the conversations of others that she was able to understand, Gigi's confidence in her Italian language abilities was strengthened, and this increased confidence surely strengthened her affiliation with the language. Her increased level of affiliation was also likely fueled substantially by her increased investment in her relationship with Amedeo and the imagined community of Italians that populated her visions of a future married life with him – a community comprised not only of Amedeo's family and friends, but also other Italian speakers she had not yet met, but nevertheless imagined herself interacting with in her vision of living and working in Italy in the distant future.

For someone whose personality is, by her own admission, quite introverted, Gigi has, in her years at Saint Agnes and beyond, managed to accumulate a wide array of opportunities for foreign language use. To some degree, we can credit agency on Gigi's part for actively seeking out some of these opportunities. If she

had not taken the initiative to search for conversation partners on Skype, for example, she would never have met Amedeo. She has also exhibited considerable agency in her ongoing self-development project, leaving her comfort zone and taking risks on numerous occasions in order to become a bolder more confident person and achieve her personal goals. As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, however, much of Gigi's success in finding the communities which have fueled her language learning can be attributed solely to chance. Since she was too shy to approach foreigners and strike up conversations on the Saint Agnes campus, for example, it was pure luck that Nathalie and Evelina, on two separate occasions, approached her. I will conclude Gigi's chapter then by wishing her continued luck in finding communities that will help her achieve eloquence in English and Italian, so that she might someday feel she can rightly claim ownership in these languages with which she is already closely affiliated.

Chapter 7

Audrey's Story

Of all the E39A students, it was perhaps Audrey that made the most effort to stay in touch with me after I left Taiwan. Even before she and her classmates discovered Facebook and began ‘friending’ me there, Audrey was regularly sending me emails with photo attachments and updates on her progress in the Saint Agnes five-year college program. I was, therefore, envisioning her as a focal participant in this study even in its earliest planning stages, and when I asked her early on via email if she would be willing to participate in any research I might do in Taiwan, her enthusiastic affirmative reply helped reassure me that my former students at Saint Agnes would indeed serve as a valuable pool of willing informants for the study I was formulating. When the time came for her to formally volunteer to be a focal participant, Audrey did, of course, offer her services, and I am extremely thankful that she did, for her story vividly highlights the impact that foreign language proficiency can have on identity construction, as well as the frequently contradictory feelings that can be involved in this process.

7.1 Life before Saint Agnes

Like Gigi, Audrey described Tai-yu as her “mother tongue.” As a result, however, of her parents’ divorce when she was very young and the fact that she grew up in urban environments, Audrey’s childhood was quite different from the close-knit small community experience that Gigi described. As a child, Audrey

was constantly shuttled back and forth between Kaohsiung, where her mother lived, and Tainan, her fathers' city, about an hour from Kaohsiung. "My sisters and I had to move like all the time from Tainan to Kaohsiung – Tainan – Kaohsiung – Tainan – Kaohsiung," she told me. According to Audrey, she actually saw very little of her parents as she was growing up. "My parents were always all the time busy and working or something," she recalled, "so I think probably when I was really little – like three or four – I think probably, like, my grandmom raised me up."

It was this substantial amount of time spent with her father's mother in Tainan when she was very young that Audrey credited for making Tai-yu the first language she learned. Since her grandmother couldn't speak Mandarin Chinese, Tai-yu was the language Audrey had the most exposure to early in life. It was not exclusively her grandmother that provided this exposure though. "All the family member – 'cuz they live with my grandmom – so they speak to my grandmom in Tai-yu," she told me. And these were not just a few family members, for Audrey's father came from a very large family. "My grandmom has about ten kids, so we got a really huge family," she explained. "My grandmom now has forty-something grandsons and granddaughters. It's a huge family." Interestingly, all these family members used Tai-yu to speak to Audrey's grandmother and to each other, but only used Mandarin Chinese when speaking directly to Audrey and her cousins. "To children, they will speak Chinese...it's just kind of a rule or something," she remarked. "I guess it's because knowing that the older generation like my mom and my father, they were not allowed to speak

Taiwanese at school, so I guess they see the child and they don't want them to be punished or something, so they try to speak Chinese to them.”

While it was mostly her grandmother that raised her when she was very young, Audrey claimed to have basically raised herself in subsequent years while her parents were both consumed with work – her mother operating her own cosmetics shop, and her father supporting himself as a professional gambler. “I guess that that kind of a situation – that kind of a life – really makes me as more independent,” she mused. Audrey was not completely on her own growing up though, for her two older sisters helped her considerably. Her oldest sister, almost five years her senior, in fact served as somewhat of a parental figure for Audrey when she was young. “She was old enough to watch us,” she told me. “We gotta, you know, help each other.”

Audrey described her childhood as generally a happy one, but admitted that, as a child, she did not like talking to classmates about her family situation – her parents' divorce and particularly her father, the professional gambler, who was sent to jail for three years on a drug conviction when she was around ten years old. “In that period, there was not that much single parent families in Taiwan,” she explained, “so I would feel a little bit embarrassed about talking about my family's stuff – especially my father 'cuz his job is not really good.” Over time, however, her family's situation ceased to be an embarrassment for her. “After growing up, there are more and more single parent families, so I just get used to it,” she told me.

Despite all the moving between Kaohsiung and Tainan, Audrey maintained very good grades throughout her childhood. She reported having no academic pressure from either of her parents at the time, saying, “I was doing my study quite well, so I guess uh – I would probably be in the top ten in the class – so my parents just were not worried about that.” Her English instruction began in the fifth grade at her elementary school in Tainan. In these English classes and all the way through junior high school, Audrey didn’t feel any particular attraction to English though. “English for me – it was just like other subjects – not very special,” she recalled. “Just like math and Chinese – like something you gotta learn.” In junior high school, her grades continued to be generally quite good, particularly in English and Chinese, but she was weak in math, so at age twelve, Audrey’s parents sent her to a cram school for additional help with the math. At the same time, she also began studying English at a cram school to strengthen her grasp of English grammar. According to Audrey, these cram school lessons were all part of her mother’s plan for her to follow the typical Taiwanese academic path – to get into a good high school, and then a good university. In addition to math and English classes at the cram schools, which she continued with until she was fifteen, Audrey’s mother also intended, during her last year of junior high school, to enroll her in a very expensive preparatory program that guaranteed its participants would pass entrance exams at a specific prestigious high school.

Audrey, however, would never enroll in this program, for she was starting to realize that languages were her forte. “When I was in junior high school, my math...it’s getting difficult,” she remembered, “and you know, I try my best to

like hold it up – like not getting dropped – but I started to realize that my Chinese and English – more something you would say more non-science stuff – is more something that I can handle and I prefer.” She was nevertheless intending to follow through with the educational plans her mother had for her until a chance sighting of a Saint Agnes advertisement set a different course for her academic future. “I just saw the Saint Agnes flyers or something – advertisements or something,” she told me. “And then I just asked my mom, ‘Can I go to Saint Agnes?’ and she’s like, ‘Yeah, of course, ‘cuz Saint Agnes, you know, the students from Saint Agnes, they got good characters or good abilities with language.’” Well aware of Saint Agnes’ reputation for producing graduates with outstanding language abilities, Audrey’s mother required no convincing that Saint Agnes and its focus on languages was a good alternative to the educational plans she had previously laid out for Audrey. Audrey’s older sister, in fact, had attempted unsuccessfully to enter Saint Agnes five years earlier, and Audrey admitted that this could also have influenced her decision.

7.2 Life at Saint Agnes

Upon entering Saint Agnes, Audrey had a very hard time at first. This was mostly due to the English department’s policy of forbidding any language other than English in any class the department offered. “In the first year of Saint Agnes, I was really frustrated about all English class, ‘cuz it’s all in English,” she recalled. “I could only understand about forty or fifty percent.” On the listening placement test that had placed Gigi in the Group 3 listening class for the second year,

Audrey's score put her, she thought (although she couldn't remember for sure), in the Group 4 class – the one slightly lower than Gigi's. By her second year at Saint Agnes, however, Audrey seemed to understand most of what I said in my class taught entirely in English. To this improvement in her listening abilities, Audrey credited transcription. As she explained:

A lot of teachers will put the mp3 file on the internet...and then I'll, like, listen to it, like, full conversation, and then listen to one sentence, and then stop and write it down. That really helps...Sometimes, like, to get one specific word, you have to listen to it ten, eleven times... Maybe I would spend five hours a day to do five minutes.

I remember Audrey's general English proficiency at that time being roughly comparable to that of Gigi – somewhere in the middle of the class if I were to rank all class members. While I didn't notice as much of a marked improvement in her English throughout the course of that year as I had with Gigi, she always seemed confident in her English communication and her grades were fairly good. I didn't sense in Audrey the competitiveness either that was so common in many of the students. Although she was certainly trying to improve her English, she seemed to me to be relatively comfortable with the proficiency level she was at then. When I asked her about this, she confirmed that she didn't feel a need to compete with her classmates, but asserted that she has by no means ever been satisfied with her English proficiency at any given time. "It feels like I'm always worse than other people," she explained. "So I mean, like, I just feel like I have to improve myself. It's not like I wanna win though, or I wanna be the best one.

But I just feel like I have to be better.” The sense of complacency that I thought I detected in Audrey when she was a student in my classroom perhaps had something to do with her attitude regarding school and grades. Unlike many of her highly competitive classmates who were obsessed with grades, class ranking, and the like, Audrey prioritized the actual knowledge gained over the grades she received and strove to achieve a balance between school and other aspects of her life. “For me, I know that school work and studying is not the most important part,” she told me. “I mean, like, it’s not the whole thing of your life.” When she was my student, Audrey was indeed dedicating quite a bit of time to non-academic pursuits. Ballroom dancing was one activity that she was particularly passionate about during her second year at Saint Agnes. I didn’t know it at the time, but there was also another language subject in which Audrey was able to shine far brighter than in my English class – French.

Unlike the English department, which requires all courses to be taught in English, the French department, acknowledging the fact that almost all Saint Agnes students start their French instruction there as absolute beginners, condones the use of Chinese to teach French, especially at the beginning levels. Teachers from France and other French-speaking countries, who lack Chinese proficiency, generally teach in a combination of French and English, but these teachers usually teach the more advanced-level classes. During Audrey’s first year at Saint Agnes, when she was struggling to understand even 40-50 percent of what English teachers said, the introductory French classes, where instruction was

in Chinese, served as a welcome break from the frustration she so often felt in English classes.

Reflecting on her first three years of French instruction at Saint Agnes, Audrey exclaimed, “I was so obsessed with French!” Explaining this obsession to me in an email message, she wrote:

The very first reason I like french is because I really think it’s a beautiful language...and also, when I grow up, we have this image about france.... romantic, beautiful, poetic, and also very untouchable! i mean when i was little, france is like a wonderland n a fantasy!! that’s why im so obsessed with it at the first place.

And she had nothing but praise for her Taiwanese French teachers that introduced her to the language, fostering her budding obsession. “We got several brilliant French teachers the first three years,” she told me. “They just teach so hard and they really want you to learn something, and then they don’t, like, push you...or force you to do something ‘cuz they all know that you are all the beginners, so they teach really patient and...I guess with their whole heart or something. So I can really feel that.”

Audrey’s obsession with French continued throughout her first three years of mandatory French classes at Saint Agnes. During this period of time, she practically memorized her French textbooks and did extremely well in these classes. This clearly had an impact on her identity, allowing her to be positioned as a sort of French expert by classmates weaker in the subject who sometimes

came to her for help. “My French grammar is pretty good,” she told me, “and I can help others with their French grammar, and that makes me feel good.”

After her first three years at Saint Agnes, however, Audrey’s obsession with French began to fade. She attributed this to lack of exposure to the language. After completing the three years of French study required of all students taking the language as a minor, she found herself unable to get into the higher level French courses, which were reserved for students majoring in French, and as she lamented on the written questionnaire, “In Taiwan, you don’t really have that many opportunities to learn French out of school.”

Somewhat ironically, Audrey did get an opportunity to practice her French in the first semester of her fifth year at Saint Agnes – after her obsession with the language had subsided considerably. A group of exchange students from France and Belgium had come to study at Saint Agnes, and Audrey was one of several volunteers recruited to help these students get accustomed to life in Taiwan by assisting them with their day-to-day living and academic challenges. “Some of them, they don’t speak good English,” she recalled. “So we speak French and Chinese, so it’s pretty tough at the first place, but afterwards, we can communicate. It’s ‘cuz my French brain can work a little bit more and their Chinese brains can work a little bit more, so we can talk a little bit more than we used to.” She met these students fairly regularly – two to three times a week for one semester – and credited the experience for an improvement in her spoken French.

While her interaction with the French-speaking exchange students provided Audrey with much more opportunity to use French than most of her classmates had, this practice she got with French pales in comparison to the opportunities she had to use English throughout her fourth and fifth year at Saint Agnes. Due to her very extroverted personality, such opportunities occurred with some regularity even before she had significant involvement in English-speaking communities. When she encountered foreigners having communication difficulties in stores, for instance, she was not at all shy about using English and offering assistance. She was also able to use English to help her sister's boyfriend navigate the British visa and immigration process when she visited her sister in England for three weeks during the summer between her fourth and fifth year at Saint Agnes. This assistance she provided her sister's boyfriend, however, proved to be the only significant instance of English use on this trip due to the fact that her sister, who was there working on a TESOL master's degree, had an almost entirely Chinese-speaking circle of friends. "Lots of her friends are Taiwanese and Hong Konger," she told me. "So I guess in U.K., I spoke less English than in Taiwan."

Immediately after returning from the U.K., however, Audrey did find herself immersed in English in Taiwan. This immersion came in her role as a coordinator for a Chinese camp that was held on the Saint Agnes campus. For this camp, students from Saint Agnes' sister schools in the United States, England, Korea, and several other countries came to Saint Agnes for three weeks to practice and get exposure to Mandarin Chinese. Although these students were ostensibly at the camp to use and improve their Chinese, their Chinese proficiency tended to be

quite low and, according to Audrey, it was actually English that was used the majority of the time at this Chinese camp. “They think it is both, but it is English,” she remarked. “I never spoke so much English in my life!” The Discourse of this community was clearly one of English as an international lingua franca, but the fact that it was a Chinese camp and participants felt obliged to include some Chinese in their communication made their Discourse a hybrid one unique to their specific situation.

The three weeks of non-stop English (peppered with Chinese) at the Chinese camp proved to be a very significant experience for Audrey – not just because of the positive aspects of the increased proficiency that resulted from her constant English use there, but also effects she regarded negatively. In the weeks following this experience, she started to feel that her increased use of English was negatively impacting her Chinese. She described this realization with the following story:

After that three weeks of the Chinese camp, when we were talking about something, we just can’t stop speaking English – even to our, you know, even to Taiwanese...So of course our English is not perfect, so we would still speak Chinese and combine some English words, and I guess I didn’t realize that I used that much. And one day I would just – “Hey, you know something?” like, you know, and I can’t think about any Chinese words in my mind – only English.

This experience of momentarily drawing a blank about how to express a thought in Chinese while the English words were instantly available really jolted Audrey.

“You forget your language, but there’s some English words in mind!...I would say it scares me, ‘cuz it’s not good!” she forcefully declared. After this experience, Audrey made the conscious decision to keep her English and Chinese clearly separated and has tried her best to avoid such code mixing ever since.

7.3 Working at Establishments that Cater to Foreigners

During her fourth year at Saint Agnes, Audrey worked for about six months at an American-owned restaurant that was frequented by many foreign customers. Working at this restaurant, she had daily opportunities to use English with these customers, but the staff at the restaurant were all Taiwanese. Shortly after her three weeks as coordinator at the Chinese camp though, Audrey began working at another establishment that catered to a large number of foreign customers. This establishment was a restaurant and bar that regularly opened up its second floor to host live band and dance events. Audrey’s official job there was promotion – advertising food and drink specials as well as the various second-floor club events – but because all three of the managers were foreigners with little Chinese proficiency, she found herself helping in a variety of other ways as well, such as translating food items for the Chinese menus.

For Audrey though, interaction at her workplace was by no means limited to her co-workers, for, as promoter, she was expected to attend the second-floor club events as well, and this proved to be quite a boon for her social life. After starting to work at this establishment and regularly attending its club events, Audrey was able to count among her circle of friends quite a few of its foreign patrons, and the

number of these foreign friends quickly snowballed. “I would say that now my friends are more foreigners than Chinese ‘cuz something about foreigners is, like, if I know you, you introduce your friends to me, so I got a lot of friends, and their friends will introduce their friends to me,” she explained.

Since Canadians make up the majority of the area’s foreign population, it is not surprising that most of Audrey’s foreign friends were Canadian. Others were from the United States and South Africa. She also said she had met people from France, Belgium, Czech, Finland, and Norway. A variety of different professions were represented in this circle of foreign friends and acquaintances. “I’ve known quite a lot of different kinds of people,” she told me, “from CEO of a big company or something to, you know, just – I don’t know – normal person, like, working...just different careers.”

With such a large number of foreign friends and a job that necessitated the use of English, Audrey’s spoken English fluency improved dramatically from her second year at Saint Agnes when I was her teacher – more so than any of the other former students that I spoke with when I returned to Saint Agnes. On the written questionnaire, Audrey credited communication with friends for this fluency, writing “I learned reading and writing mostly from school and speaking and listening from my friends.” And the amount of English speaking and listening experience she was getting was indeed truly substantial. “I guess now I would say that in my life, I would speak English and Chinese like half and half,” she estimated during our May 2009 interview. Audrey also told me during that interview that her two groups of friends – foreigners and Taiwanese – were at that

time completely separate. She attributed this to the stigma that clubbing has in Taiwanese society – particularly for females. “I guess, like, the clubbing stuff for Taiwanese, it’s still something bad,” she explained. Sensitive to this fact, Audrey was quite cautious about luring her Taiwanese friends into her community of foreigners, which was very much centered around clubbing. When the restaurant at her workplace had a food special, she would tell her Taiwanese friends about it, but she never made any attempt to promote the second floor club events to Taiwanese friends.

7.4 Facebook and the Use of Different Languages to Express Different Emotions

When Audrey first added herself to my Facebook friends list, she had not yet made the decision to cease mixing English and Chinese. At that time, she would frequently post on Facebook and another website her own poetry and writing that often mixed Chinese, English, and French. The following piece, entitled *Splendeur*, is one example of these creations, which she called her “freewriting”:

渺小的活著
懷著渺小的偉大夢想
以為
沒有甚麼能夠阻止
試圖攫取
在延長的道路盡頭
微弱的閃光
on and off
and on and off
and on and off
on my way
always hoping it will still be on when i get there
find it attracted
find it dangerous
feels like being friends with a lamb
yet im a lion

my precious

ca me fait triste que tu es au le pays loin loin de moi

ca me fait contente que je vais te vois pendant deux semaines

bisou

When I interviewed her a few months later though, the experience she had had of momentarily forgetting how to express something in Chinese had prompted her to stop doing this sort of hybrid writing. “I used to do that,” she told me. “I just don’t appreciate that anymore...I realize that I don’t want to confuse Chinese and English anymore, so I stopped doing that...Even when we are speaking, I don’t like people to say some English words when we are speaking Chinese.”

After ceasing to produce postings and writing that mixed languages, Audrey started using mostly English on her Facebook page. This was certainly understandable, considering the fact that her Facebook friends list of over 700 people included both Taiwanese and foreigners. Many of the things she wrote on the site, such as status postings, were clearly intended for both audiences. She felt somewhat conflicted though about her use of English in posts directed only at Taiwanese friends, such as comments on their photos. As she explained:

The more I use English, the more I’m aware of my Chinese. So I guess the more English I speak, the more correct Chinese I want to speak...because once you use [English] more and more, you will forget what is that in Chinese...I guess now I got some other people to practice English. I don’t have to practice my English with Taiwanese only.

The fear of losing proficiency in Chinese had Audrey looking to get as much practice as she could get speaking Chinese to her fellow Taiwanese. Hence, she felt a bit guilty about using English with her Taiwanese friends and classmates. She nevertheless often did so on Facebook. “I would think that I wanna express this stuff in English. It’s better than Chinese,” She told me. “When I want to comment on a photo or something, I will want to say, “I guess I met this person before,” and I’d just rather speak English – not Chinese...but I don’t think that is a good habit.”

In spite of not thinking it was a good habit to use English in communication directed at Taiwanese friends, she was able to offer some justification for the practice. For Audrey, certain languages are just ideally suited for expressing specific emotions. Tai-yu, for example, was, according to Audrey, best suited for expressing any extreme emotion – especially anger. She explained this with the following statements:

When you wanna say something bad about someone or something, we will always say it in Taiwanese. It’s like it can express directly what you wanna say...I guess it’s because of the tone – yeah, it’s more emotional than Chinese ‘cuz Chinese, I guess, is more gentle, more polite, but, like, Taiwanese is more emotional and it’s got more anger and uh – yeah, different emotion there.

Similarly, Audrey felt that there were certain feelings and emotions that could most accurately be expressed in English. English, she told me, was in her view far more capable of expressing extreme casualness, for example. “Sometimes I

want to greet some people like ‘How’s it goin’?’ – like ‘What’s up?’ – something,” she explained. “I wouldn’t say it in Chinese ‘cuz we don’t use it...not in Chinese. We don’t say, ‘How’s it goin’?’ in Chinese ‘cuz even if we say *Ni hao ma?* it’s not – no, it’s not the same.” For Audrey, Mandarin Chinese is sophisticated, elegant, and polite – all extremely favorable characteristics in her opinion⁴³. She told me, however, that these same qualities make it less than ideal to express extreme casualness, extreme anger, or even tell a joke. “Jokes told in Taiwanese are more funny – funnier than other languages,” she remarked. With this argument that Tai-yu, Mandarin Chinese, and English are each uniquely suited to express specific feelings and emotions, Audrey was able to reconcile somewhat the guilt she felt for sometimes using English with her Taiwanese friends and classmates, whether in person or online. Sometimes, she felt that such practices were appropriate, “so you can express something like – for sure – excellence.”

7.5 Tai-yu Revitalization

Although Audrey claimed a deep affiliation with Tai-yu, she reported feeling somewhat ashamed of her inability to express complex thoughts in the language, and, just as she feared she was losing her Mandarin Chinese and French, Audrey also, in our May 2009 interview, expressed concern about losing her Tai-yu.

“That is my first language, but now the speaking level is like – I can’t speak very

⁴³ For the written questionnaire’s hypothetical question about what language she would want her future children to speak if they were allowed to speak only one language, for example, Audrey chose Mandarin Chinese because “the way of thinking of Chinese is very sophisticated, careful and understandable.”

well Taiwanese ‘cuz I can only – like simple conversation, but I can’t handle the more deeper thing,” she explained. “I realize that I don’t use it anymore, and I don’t want to lose this, so I guess I can practice a little bit more rather than just talk to people like my grandmom.”

Indeed, Audrey’s grandmother was the only person, at the time of our first interview, with whom she had entire conversations completely in Tai-yu. Her occasional use of Tai-yu with friends was, as discussed earlier, restricted to the expression of extreme emotion and for telling jokes. She told me, however, that in the interest of not losing the Tai-yu, she did want to expand her use of it a bit when speaking to friends. “I want practice – a little bit,” she said.

Just as she wanted to personally revitalize her own Tai-yu, Audrey was generally in favor of large-scale Tai-yu revitalization efforts in Taiwan, such as the recent introduction of Tai-yu into the elementary school curriculum. “I guess it’s a little too much pressure for kids,” she stated, “but I think it’s necessary.” Unlike some in Southern Taiwan though, Audrey was not at all in favor of a revitalized Tai-yu at the expense of Mandarin Chinese. “A lot of Taiwanese, they realize now that Taiwanese is like, you know, not using it that much in Taiwan, so lots of people want it to come back ‘cuz they think Taiwanese is our language – not Chinese,” she explained. Disagreeing with this stance, Audrey told me that she feels strong affiliations with both languages and believes that Tai-yu and Mandarin Chinese complement each other and can co-exist in harmony. “I think it’s both – like tools – two friends – different people,” she commented.

7.6 Different Languages, Different Selves

Audrey also admitted in our May 2009 interview that, when communicating in English, she felt like somewhat of a different person than she did speaking Chinese. This was largely due to the different interlocutors that she used each of these languages with. She described the Chinese Audrey as “caring about other people’s feelings – thinking about it more...more sensitive...I care about their feelings – like, I guess Chinese feelings are really easy to hurt ‘cuz even myself, it’s the same.” The English Audrey, in contrast, was much more care-free since she didn’t feel the need to tread so lightly when she communicated in English with her foreign friends. “I guess I would be more comfortable with foreigner friends,” she told me, “‘cuz I can be myself more. I don’t have to, like, be careful about everything...With foreigners, you can say whatever you want to say...They don’t take things that serious, so you can joke lots.” When I spent some time with Audrey and a group of her foreign friends, I saw exactly what she was referring to when she made these comments. Audrey and these friends – mostly Canadian males – shared a jocular sort of camaraderie, constantly teasing one another in a jovial way. Totally absent were concerns about saving face that are so often present in interactions between Taiwanese.

For acquaintances who were not friends at all, these two selves – the care-free English one for communication with foreigners, and the more cautious Chinese one for communication with Taiwanese – still applied due to the different sensitivities typical of the two groups. She illustrated this with two examples from her workplace:

When I'm working...there's a party or something, and a man comes to me, and then he says like, "Can I buy you a drink?" and I will say, "Okay, sure," and he will say, "What do you want to drink?" "Um – gin & tonic." "Okay, gin & tonic,"... You know, buying drinks for girls, I think, probably is nothing for foreigners, but for Taiwanese, he will think like you have some kind of saying yes to something...you know, you can have some sort of different more special thing with – not in a sexual way, but you can talk to them more – something like that.

Another thing is the asking for the telephone number. Okay, if a foreigner come to you and then ask you, "Can I have your telephone number?" or something, it's like I would say, "Um – well, you can come to [this club] – like I will be at [this club] like every weekend, so if you come to here, you will see me," and obviously I am refusing you that I don't want to give you my phone number. And he will say, "Oh, okay." Or I will say, "I have a boyfriend" – something like that, and he'll say, "Oh, okay." And if there's a Taiwanese guy come to me, say the same thing, and I say the same thing back to him, he will probably feel offensive – like "Where? I don't – I don't mean to ask you to be my girlfriend" or something...I guess they have that kind of intent, but they just don't want to admit it.

Since she felt the need to deal so differently with foreigners and Taiwanese, it's not at all surprising that Audrey thought she was portraying different selves in the two languages. The fact that she tried not to mix English and Chinese even

though some of her interlocutors may have had some proficiency in both languages probably also contributed to the separate selves Audrey associated with English and Chinese.

When I asked her whether she perceived a separate French Audrey, she admitted that she hadn't had enough interaction with French speakers to really develop a French self. After a bit of contemplation, she then told me, "I guess my French is usually for the function of surprising people 'cuz not many people in Taiwan speak French...I guess it's just to make myself different." While Audrey's fluency in English did make her stand out from much of the population in Southern Taiwan, it hardly surprised anyone. It isn't considered at all unnatural for Taiwanese to speak English. Audrey's use of French, on the other hand, was definitely a case of denaturalization since it subverted the essentialist assumptions people have about Taiwanese people and the French language. Each time Audrey was able to surprise people by speaking French, the reaction helped her to see herself as truly different from others. "I would get really excited when I meet the French people 'cuz there are not many French people in Taiwan," she told me. "So the French people I met, they are just, 'Wow! There's a girl speaking French in Taiwan!'" French here, for Audrey, was satisfying that basic human desire to stand out from others, and thus played a significant role for her identity, regardless of the fact that she noticed no distinct French self.

7.7 Plans for Life After Saint Agnes Graduation

At the time of my first interview with Audrey in May of 2009, she had just applied for a Korean government scholarship to study Korean at a university near Seoul for a year. Her interest in the Korean language and culture had first been sparked by talking to Koreans that had come to Saint Agnes for the Chinese camp a year earlier. “I don’t really know what am I gonna do with the Korean,” she told me. “I just feel like studying another language.” There would be a total of ten students from colleges and universities in Taiwan that would receive this scholarship from the Korean government. Audrey didn’t know how good her chances really were. She therefore had several alternate plans.

Her first alternate plan was to return to Saint Agnes in the two-year French program. If she were to remain an English major in Saint Agnes’ two-year English program, Audrey would be required to take quite a few English literature classes, and the handful of English literature classes she had taken her fourth and fifth year had been enough to convince her that she wanted no further English literature study. “I guess literature is not my stuff, so I don’t wanna study more literature,” she declared. “I’m learning these languages as a tool – not something I want to be really professional. I mean like in an academic way.” She told me that if she wanted to learn more English, she would go abroad to do so. “I guess that would help me more,” she said. “But now I guess I wanna learn more about my French ‘cuz I feel like I’m losing my French.” As a French major, Audrey would, of course, have to take French literature classes, but she welcomed these

courses as additional opportunities to improve her French. When she told me this, she had not yet taken the entrance exam for Saint Agnes' two-year French program, but she seemed quite confident that she would score high enough to be accepted.

Another alternate plan had to do with Audrey's more long-term ambition of working in the fashion industry – specifically in fashion marketing. In addition to the two-year Saint Agnes French program entrance exam, she was also planning to take an exam for admission to a textile marketing program at a university in Taipei. “So I guess I got three things going on now – French department, Korean scholarship, and the university,” she told me, summing up the various options she had in mind for her immediate future. Audrey wasn't terribly concerned about the possibility of any of this not working out though. “I'm always prepared to go to work, so I guess that's the back-up plan as well,” she told me.

As far as languages were concerned, Audrey wrote on her written questionnaire that she envisioned herself, ten or fifteen years in the future, still using English and Mandarin Chinese most of the time, “but more Korean, French, and Cantonese than now.” Audrey's interest in Cantonese came originally from her interaction with her sister's Hong Kong friends in England. She really liked the sound of the language and believed that its similarity to Tai-yu would make it easy for her to learn. According to Audrey though, Cantonese is not a language that is viewed favorably in Taiwan. “Most of the Taiwanese don't appreciate Cantonese because they think it's not nice at all,” she informed me. “But uh – I don't know – I'm so in love with the Cantonese.”

As for the place of Tai-yu in Audrey's future, she told me that she didn't envision herself using it at all professionally, but did intend to speak it at home if she has a child in order to expose this future child to the language. "If I have a kid, I will force him or her to speak Tai-yu," she said. "Of course if he or she strongly doesn't want to, I won't force them anymore, but I guess that's part of me, so I wanna give my children, like, all of me."

English, Audrey told me in our May 2009 interview, was an absolutely indispensable tool for achieving her goals – especially her long-term goal of succeeding in the fashion marketing business. Marketing, after all, is all about making your voice heard. As she explained to me, "If you got this ability – you can speak English, you got more and more – much more – chance than other people who doesn't speak or use English, to voice yourself." And making her voice heard marketing her ideas and abilities was not something that Audrey had a problem doing. On the written questionnaire, she gave herself a 4.5 (on a scale of 5) for self-reliance, 4 for boldness, and 4.5 for willingness to take risks to achieve goals. She told me that she would be quite comfortable promoting her abilities in an interview situation, but acknowledged that that might not be the appropriate approach to take when interviewing with a Taiwanese company. "For most foreigners, they would appreciate more about your confidence about yourself and your courage," she explained. "But, like, for Taiwanese, if you say the same thing – you know, the exact same thing – to them, they would probably think you're cocky or something. So I guess I would not do that – not that much."

7.8 English Ownership

In spite of her fluency and confidence in her use of English to achieve her goals, Audrey, at the time of our May 2009 interview, was reluctant to claim any sort of ownership in the language. In her view, doing so would necessitate granting some degree of Chinese ownership to anyone who gained Chinese proficiency – something she was unwilling to do. “Now, like, there are more and more people learning Chinese, and I met some foreigners who speak perfect Chinese as well...I still think that I got ownership of Chinese,” she asserted. Chinese ethnicity, however, for Audrey, was not necessarily a requirement for ownership. “Some Italian students on our campus, they got a family – three sisters. So I would say Chinese is their language ‘cuz they were born here,” she explained. “They grew up with this language, so I would think that they are connected to this language as much as me.”

While she did grant English ownership status to those from traditionally English speaking countries like the United States and Australia, she claimed to also view English as an international language. The two associations fluctuated, for Audrey, depending on who her interlocutors were. “When I speak to an Australian, I would know it’s your language,” she told me, “but if I speak English to Czech – the people from Czech – I would think it’s an international language ‘cuz I’m using this to communicate with you...It’s not my language. It’s not your language.”

Perhaps Audrey would be less hesitant to claim a stronger affiliation with English if the majority of the foreign friends with whom she used English

regularly were not from Canada and the United States. If it were instead Czech friends that she was communicating with in English with the same regularity, she might have been saying, “It’s my language *and* it’s your language” rather than “It’s not my language. It’s not your language.” As she communicated within her community of mostly Canadians and Americans, she was instead always conscious of the fact that her interlocutors’ relationship with the language was one of inheritance, which, in her view, constitutes true ownership. Given Audrey’s fear of losing proficiency in and concern for conserving the two languages she herself claimed an inheritance relationship with – Mandarin Chinese and Tai-yu – it was not at all surprising that she placed such a premium on the inheritance relationship where languages are concerned. Since she granted this degree of importance to inheritance, the very thought of comparing her affiliation with English to that of a Canadian seemed somewhat ludicrous to her.

7.9 After Saint Agnes Graduation

In the months following her graduation from Saint Agnes, Audrey experienced many changes in her life. She did not receive the scholarship to study in Korea or get accepted into the textile marketing program at the university in Taipei. Audrey didn’t seem heartbroken by these rejections though. She decided to work for awhile, and then resume her studies as a French major at Saint Agnes a year later. Since she made this decision before the French department entrance exam, she opted to postpone the exam for a year rather than take it and request a deferment upon acceptance.

7.9.1 Employment

When the restaurant/bar/club that she did promotion for closed down shortly after her graduation, Audrey started working at several part time jobs: teaching at an English cram school, conducting private tutorials in both English and French, and doing promotion for a newly opened bar/nightclub catering primarily to a foreign clientele.

At her job working for the English cram school, Audrey conducted conversation classes to train high school students for the listening and speaking portions of the GEPT (General English Proficiency Test) – an exam commissioned and administered by the Taiwan Ministry of Education. She went into this teaching assignment filled with enthusiasm, eager to impart her knowledge of the English language to her students using methods utilized at Saint Agnes, such as encouraging students to engage in active learning and using English as the sole medium of instruction. “I’ve learned I’ve been through a great educational process from Saint Agnes,” she told me during our March 2010 interview. “I’m trying to give them something that I got from Saint Agnes.” Audrey quickly found, however, that the majority of her students were very resistant to the kind of instruction she was so passionately attempting to provide. “I try to give them something new – something different,” she explained. “But they don’t seem interested in that.” The root of the problem, it seemed, was that years of passive learning in teacher-centered classrooms had made most of Audrey’s cram school students highly reluctant to speak in class. “A lot of them –

I would say like 70% of the students – they’d just rather sit there and be quiet,” she told me, “because their past, let’s see, three, seven – past ten years’ education process is only, for them, sit there, be quiet, listen to the teacher.” In one extreme instance, her insistence that a student speak in front of the class actually served to reduce the student to tears and subsequently withdraw from the course. As Audrey recalled:

They were, like, taking so long to decide who was going to come up to the stage...and I was like, “Okay, fine. It’s you.” I just assigned some people...The only thing you have to do is read out loud to everybody. But she is too shy to read out loud, and eventually, I was like, “Okay, how about this. You just read one sentence and then you can go, okay?” And she’s like, “Okay” – read, finish the sentence, and then go downstairs and start to cry – and never talked to me again!

With competition among cram schools quite fierce, Audrey’s employers were, of course, very concerned with retaining students. It was not unexpected then that when some students and parents complained about Audrey’s methods, she faced a reprimand from her superior. “I got in trouble because of this,” she reported. “The other day, my boss is like, ‘Um – maybe you should cut off the time that you’re having those portions – like discussion time with your students – because the students think it’s too much.’” Another concession that she was forced to make was the abandonment of the ‘English-Only’ policy in her classroom. “At the beginning of this whole thing, pure English in my class – so students were not

allowed to speak Chinese,” she told me. “But now, I speak a lot of Chinese.” Compromising her principles for the sake of job preservation was not at all easy for Audrey. She voiced her frustrations, telling me, “I actually don’t know what to do...I wanna keep my job, but also I wanna be a good teacher that my students can get something from.” She did stress, however, that a few students in her class appreciated her methods and did, in fact, make the job a rewarding experience for her. “Some students are, like, trying to improve their English – trying to understand what I’m talking about in class,” she said. “They like this, and they will try to answer, even if it’s wrong. I appreciate that.”

At the time of our March 2010 interview, Audrey was also doing six hours of private tutoring per week. In these one-on-one tutoring situations, she of course experienced none of the frustrations that plagued her at her cram school job and she was able to not only provide English instruction, but also French. One of her tutees, in fact, was a student at Saint Agnes who was working with the same French textbooks Audrey had obsessively memorized just a few years before. She was, thus, quite familiar with the material and didn’t have any problem conducting these tutorials. The only downside of tutoring, according to Audrey, was the unstable nature of the job. “Sometimes students will call you and just cancel the class,” she told me. “I can’t count on it.”

Yet another part-time job that Audrey held in March of 2010 was one doing promotion for a bar/nightclub that had just been opened by two Americans. Unlike the restaurant/bar/nightclub she had previously worked for that catered to both foreign and Taiwanese customers, this establishment made no attempt to

attract locals. Audrey was paid by the hour for the time she spent promoting events hosted the club hosted. This promotion involved distributing flyers and spending a considerable amount of time on Facebook issuing invitations to some of her 700+ Facebook friends. “Every week, we’ll have different events – like two different events in a week at least,” she told me. “So I have to, like, invite a lot of people. That is, like, a lot of time consuming.”

For both the PR job at the bar/nightclub and the cram school teaching position, Audrey did have interviews, and she told me that, in both of these instances, she had made efforts to promote herself and her abilities. In these interviews, however, doing so was perhaps not such a risky proposition since the head of the cram school teaching team was a Taiwanese Canadian and the nightclub owners were American. These Americans were also already quite familiar with the promotional work she had done for her previous employer and, according to Audrey, were planning to hire her even before she walked into the interview. “They kind of like definitely wanted me to work there,” she said. “So they just wanted me to tell them about all things – like details.” Similarly, prospective students seeking her services for private tutoring tended to already be quite aware of Audrey’s abilities since they were usually referred to her by mutual friends. Promotion of her abilities when initially speaking with these potential tutees was, therefore, generally unnecessary.

7.9.2 Independence

Audrey told me that she managed to live on the money she made with her various part-time jobs, but only barely. “I get, like, really good money from [the cram school job], but it’s still not enough,” she lamented. “Even with my tutoring job or PR job, every month, it’s still breaking even – hardly.” Such financial difficulties would not have been an issue if Audrey still lived with her parents, as is the norm for unmarried Taiwanese young people. Several months prior to our March 2010 interview, however, Audrey, desiring greater independence, moved out of her mother’s house. Audrey’s mother had always maintained a very hands-off approach to parenting, basically allowing her to do whatever she liked as long as she kept her grades up. As Audrey put it, “She was always very, like, uh – being ‘whatever’ attitude, like, what you do. Just study hard.” In spite of the fact that Audrey already enjoyed more freedom than many of her Taiwanese peers, this was not enough for her. Explaining her reasons for wanting to leave her mother’s house, Audrey told me in an email message:

i want freedom, not just freedom...more freedom. I want to see the world in my own way n experience myself. I know i have much more freedom compare to other people as same age as me, it's not that i don't appreciate. it's just not enough for me! The other reason is....i want change! The more I grow up the more i realized that if u spent too much time with somebody, you become like that...One thing about mother that i don't like is that she has really really bad temper. I know what makes her become

like this but i don't want to be like that. And the longer I stay with my mother, the more I think I went insane.....i mean I act like her when i'm angry. I can't control my anger and sometimes tend to be violent sometimes. I know it sounds very selfish but i don't want myself to become like that!!

Audrey assumed that her mother wouldn't have a problem with her moving out, even though doing so was still pretty much unheard of for young unmarried people in Taiwanese society (except in cases like Gigi's, where leaving the parents' household is for the purpose of attending school or working in a different area). Audrey's mother was already quite displeased though with Audrey's decision to take a year off from school. She held her tongue, saying little when Audrey was actually moving out, but several weeks later, her feelings came bubbling to the surface and the two of them had a huge fight where harsh words were exchanged. "She's kind of like, you know, whatever – 'I just consider that I never had a daughter – such a daughter like you!' ...pretty intense," Audrey recalled, describing the argument. When I spoke to her in March of 2010, Audrey and her mother had not spoken at all since this fight occurred the month before, and she did not foresee reconciliation occurring any time in the immediate future. Although she thought her father would probably pay her tuition when she returned to Saint Agnes, Audrey acknowledged the greater responsibility that came with her newfound independence. "I have to be more realistic now," she told me. "I have to be more responsible for my own financial circumstances...I think it will be hard for me because, like, now I have to cut down a lot of expenses which I

love – shopping, for example. So it will be hard for me, but I have to deal with it.”

7.9.3 Community of Mostly Foreign Friends

Upon moving out of her mother’s house, Audrey rented an apartment with two roommates – an English teacher from Canada and a student from Guatemala. She also continued to maintain a large amount of involvement with the same international community dominated by Canadians and Americans that she had originally been introduced to at the restaurant/bar/nightclub she had worked at the year before. After this establishment closed, her relationship with Greg, one of her former managers there who was an Anglophone South African, also became a romantic one, and with the increased level of English interaction that this relationship brought, Audrey’s ratio of English/Chinese usage changed from the 50/50 she had estimated in May of 2009. Being in this relationship with a non-Chinese-speaker and having jobs that required her to use English, along with the fact that she was no longer in school speaking Chinese to classmates, were all factors that she considered in giving me an updated usage estimate in March 2010 of 60% English and 40% Chinese.

While she seldom saw her old Saint Agnes classmates, Audrey reported that more Taiwanese had joined her group of friends that, just ten months earlier, had been composed almost entirely of foreigners. “They hang out with those foreigners as well, so I feel less that I live in a different world,” she remarked. Additional foreigners had also joined the community. These newcomers were

still mostly from Canada and other English-speaking countries like South Africa, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, but two new friends from France had recently joined the group as well, providing Audrey with occasional French practice. “The French guy, his English is not understandable,” she told me. “I mean, like, his English is really good, but the accent is not understandable. I would rather speak French with him.”

A few of Audrey’s friends from this community had, at the time of our March 2010 interview, recently formed a sub-community – a comedy troupe that had staged two shows (mostly in English) at the bar/nightclub that Audrey worked for. Their shows consisted of some improvisational skits, some that were scripted and rehearsed, and some pre-recorded video footage. Audrey had been enlisted to help not only as an actress/comedienne, but with various other aspects of these productions as well. “I joined the writing meeting and production meeting, promotion meeting,” she told me. “But I mean, like, writing meeting, I would just sit there and if people come up with some idea, I’ll be like ‘Oh, that’s cool!’ or like just give a little small line.” Although she claimed to have contributed little to the creative process behind the group’s shows, Audrey’s Chinese abilities did prove quite useful for the preparation of one skit, where the humor was derived from the mispronunciation of Chinese words. As Audrey explained:

There was one skit which – they want to constantly use it – the misunderstanding between Chinese and English – because, you know, sometimes people can’t speak Chinese that accurately in the pronunciation. So Taiwanese people will misunderstand. For

example, the first show, one of the skits – *oral sex* and *face mask*.

Sounds the same. Okay, *face mask* is *kouzou*, and *oral sex* is *koujou*. So when foreigners try to pronounce it, it's quite easy to be misunderstood...It was really funny.

This *face mask/oral sex* skit performed by Audrey and other members of the mostly Canadian comedy troupe actually illustrates quite well the Discourse not only of the comedy troupe, but also the larger community, composed mostly of foreigners, that attended their shows. The majority of community members were English speakers with only a rudimentary knowledge of Chinese, so communication within the community was conducted almost entirely in English. Since they were, however, all living in Taiwan, immersed in the Chinese language, and at least occasionally needing to make use of some survival-level Chinese, Chinese words and misunderstandings were frequently referenced. Linguistic difficulties, therefore, served as prime material to exploit for comedic purposes, with the audience of fellow community members able to recognize the linguistic inadequacies of their community in general, and laugh at them. Audrey and the other Taiwanese community members, being adept at both languages, were perhaps able to appreciate the humor of this sort of skit most since they could simultaneously view such situations from the community insider's perspective and from the perspective of outsiders in the larger Taiwanese society.

7.10 Trips to Korea and South Africa

Even though her scholarship to study in Korea did not materialize, Audrey did travel to Korea for five days with her mother and sisters (just prior to the big fight with her mother). Excitedly telling me about this trip, Audrey reported, “I have to say it was awesome! – ‘cuz I went skiing and I used a lot of Korean!” The bit of Korean that Audrey had learned through Korean friends and self-study apparently proved quite useful, for she told me that with a little help from her Korean phrasebook, she was able to effectively communicate in simple conversations with Koreans during this trip. “My mom nor neither of my sisters can speak Korean. I speak a little bit, and then I bring my little Korean book, so I tried to communicate with Koreans,” she said. “That was good. That was a great experience.” Korean, Audrey maintained, was quite easy for her because a large percentage of Korean vocabulary items had long ago been borrowed from China. “A lot of Korean vocabulary is really really similar to Tai-yu,” she told me. “I was surprised! It’s so easy for me to learn those vocabulary...It’s more, like, soft pronunciation, but it’s quite similar.” Both further Korean study and Cantonese study, however, would have to wait until a later date, for Audrey told me in our March 2010 interview that it was the improvement of her French that she wanted to prioritize in the immediate future.

In December of 2009, Audrey also traveled to South Africa with her South African boyfriend Greg to visit his family there – a trip that was almost a month in duration. Audrey’s interaction during this trip was almost completely restricted

to Greg's family and one neighbor, for nearly the entire month was spent at the family's beach house in a rural coastal part of the country. She described her time there as extremely quiet and peaceful. "Every day, woke up at eight o'clock in the morning – just go to the beach, chill, and come back and have lunch," she recalled. "Then Greg would go fishing and sometimes I would go with him."

Audrey told me that she got along well with Greg's parents and brothers during the month she spent with them, but she reported having difficulties at first understanding their English – particularly the English of his mother. "[She] has, like, an even more stronger British accent than Greg," she explained. In actuality, the family had been in South Africa for generations, and Greg's mother's English was apparently a variety referred to by Lass (2002) as *Conservative South African English*⁴⁴. Audrey, however, viewed Greg and his family not so much as South Africans, but instead as British people with South African citizenship. "Their family is British," she told me, and she went on to point out that Greg's mother was, in fact, eligible to apply for a British passport since her grandfather had been a British citizen. The English that Audrey associated with South Africa, in contrast with that used by Greg's family, was either the local standard (referred to by Lass as *Respectable South African English*) or the English typically used by those of a lower socio-economic status with less education (referred to by Lass as *Extreme South African English*). With apologies for her attempt at replicating this accent, Audrey explained, "For me, I define South African accent as like 'Hoowr yooo todaaii?'"

⁴⁴ Lass (2002) describes this variety of South African English as "The type of Speech least distinguishable from Southern English, at its highest end (what I would call 'Extreme Conservative') virtually RP of a rather archaic type" (p. 111).

Besides being challenged initially with understanding the accents of Greg's family members in South Africa, Audrey also reported having another minor difficulty at the start of her stay there. The role she granted English of expressing her 'casual self' had to be temporarily suspended when she found that she was expected, in the company of Greg's family, to be more polite than she was ever used to being in English. This, Audrey told me, was not an easy adjustment for her to make. Phrasing requests politely, for example, took a bit of getting used to. "In Taiwan, I pretty much say, 'Do you want some Milo? Do you want something? Do you want blah blah blah?'" she explained. "I never say, 'Would you like' – never ever!" Although Audrey was able to adjust to more polite forms without much difficulty, the feeling of awkwardness she experienced doing so illustrates the tremendous impact of particular Discourse communities' ways of expression and being.

7.11 Professional Aspirations

Audrey told me in our March 2010 interview that the ideal future she envisioned for herself was still working in fashion marketing, either in America, France, or Taiwan. "That is still my dream," she reported. Realization of this dream would, of course, require that she obtain additional knowledge and qualifications after completing her French degree at Saint Agnes. The means by which she envisioned achieving this was completing a fashion marketing program at Parson's School of Design in New York City. Since the program is terribly expensive, however, Audrey saw herself having to work and save for quite awhile

after graduating from Saint Agnes in order to finance her dream. After finishing all her schooling, she planned to eventually get a job in the fashion marketing industry. She had no delusions, however, that this would be an easy business to break into, telling me that she would most certainly need to start with a very low-level position.

7.12 Updated Relationships with Languages

In March of 2010, Audrey was still concerned about losing Chinese proficiency due to the large amount of time she spent using English each day, and after several Taiwanese joined her community of predominantly foreigners, she made a point of speaking only Chinese with them when foreigners were not present. Many of these Taiwanese girls that had recently joined the group, she told me, did initially try to speak to her in English, but when they did this, she always responded in Chinese, and it did not take long for them to get the message and start speaking Chinese with her. When I asked Audrey if she had made similar efforts to speak Tai-yu with friends, as she had told me she wanted to do in May of 2009, she admitted that she had not. Her grandmother continued to be the only interlocutor with whom she had any significant interaction in Tai-yu.

Despite the brief adoption of a more polite English self while interacting with Greg's family in South Africa, Audrey quickly reclaimed her casual English self upon returning to Taiwan. Her association of English with casualness not only allowed her to differentiate separate English and Chinese selves, but also present a 'casual self' in English that differentiated her from other Taiwanese, in both her

own view and the eyes of others. One Canadian member of the comedy troupe, for example, told me, “She’s very personable – not like most Taiwanese girls.” In projecting a casual English persona and appearing so personable and relaxed with foreigners, however, Audrey did risk giving people an inaccurate impression. Her former roommate from Guatemala, for instance, told me, “Audrey seems like a girl that is not proud of her Taiwanese heritage and likes all things foreign.”

Audrey told me that she was often misunderstood like this and cited as the main reason for this misunderstanding the fact that her foreign and Taiwanese friends still, for the most part, seldom crossed paths. “I have a lot of Taiwanese friends and some of them don’t speak English very well,” she explained. “That’s why they don’t hang out with my foreign friends, and that is why people think I always hang out with foreigners instead of Taiwanese.”

Having had a bit more interaction with French speakers, Audrey reported that she was beginning to detect more of a distinct French self. “It makes me feel like a different person when I speak French,” she remarked. Just as she had earlier told me that her distinct Chinese and English selves were motivated by the very different sensitivities of her interlocutors in those two languages, Audrey also felt that it was distinct qualities of the French speakers she sometimes interacted with that caused her to feel like a different person when speaking French with them. “I think it’s not because of the language that makes me feel this way but the [French-speaking] people that I hang out with,” she explained. She couldn’t pinpoint though what it was about these French speakers that served to differentiate them from her Chinese and English-speaking friends and

acquaintances, nor exactly how she felt different when speaking French with them. Surprising people with her French abilities, she reported, was still something she enjoyed tremendously. “Yes, I like the feeling when I surprise people by speaking French,” she told me again.

When I asked Audrey in our March 2010 interview if she felt any closer to being able to claim ownership in the English language, she replied that she did not and cited her inability to comprehend and appreciate much of the humor in English language comedy as evidence that English was not *her* language. As she explained:

A lot of people ask me if I want to be a part of ImprovLeague, but I always say no because still when I listen to it or stuff, there’s still a lot of things I don’t understand. Like I don’t get the jokes completely – like a hundred percent...I can handle conversation. I can handle, like, reading some narration. I can handle listening to other people...But when they’re doing stuff on ImprovLeague, um – first of all, it’s very very quick, and you have to get the joke, and sometimes I just don’t understand...So I still don’t think English is mine...I don’t think I’ve got there yet.

Saying that she didn’t think she’d gotten there *yet*, it sounded to me like Audrey was, in fact, allowing for the possibility that in the future (presumably after mastering English humor), she might feel that she can rightly claim English as her own. She told me that was indeed possible, but admitted that obtaining linguistic ownership by any means other than inheritance continued to be a concept that she

had difficulty embracing. “I just think the idea that English belongs to me or anybody who is not native speaker is very strange,” she explained. “But we totally are connected with English. That’s for sure.”

Audrey’s connection to English was directly observable in her interaction in her community of mostly foreign friends. In a discussion of English translations on Taiwanese signs that seemed humorous or absurd from the English ‘native speaker’ perspective, for example, I observed Audrey aligning herself with her North American interlocutors by ridiculing and laughing at these translations⁴⁵. Her frequent use of the word *like* as a discourse marker could likewise be an attempt, albeit a largely unconscious one, at foregrounding similarity between her and the community of foreigners, and indexing her membership in this community, for this was a feature I observed in the speech of many of its members. After reading an early draft of her story, filled with quotations from our first interview, Audrey expressed surprise at the amount she had used *like* in this manner. “I didn’t realize I said *like* so much!” she remarked⁴⁶.

Audrey’s strong connection with English, she acknowledged, had been further reinforced by her relationship with her Anglophone South African boyfriend Greg. Just as Gigi felt a closer affiliation with Italian as a result of her relationship with Amedeo, Audrey too felt that in becoming romantically involved with someone

⁴⁵ Using Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) terminology, this would be a case of *adequation*, with Audrey positioning herself as similar to and showing solidarity with her interlocutors, and *distinction* – differentiating herself from Taiwanese with lower English proficiency who might produce such translations or not recognize their absurdity.

⁴⁶ Fuller (2003) found that her study participants from southern Illinois actually used *like* as a discourse marker more frequently in relatively informal interviews than they did in casual conversations with friends (an average of 11.6 instances of *like* use per 1,000 words in interview data and 7.8 instances per 1,000 words in casual conversation data). She attributes this largely to the fact that contexts in which the use of *like* are pragmatically useful, such as approximation and marking focus, are especially common in interview situations.

she believed to have true ownership of English (through inheritance), she had, in a sense, married into the English language. As she explained in an email message:

I do feel that I have stronger connection with English...I feel something very close to me (greg) is attached with english n that makes me feel more intimate for sure. It's like when you marry somebody then his/her family become your family too!!! you r not just with this person, you r also with his/her family n everything about him/her.....so i guess im having a serious relationship with english too!!!

Unlike Gigi though, who envisioned a future for herself with Amedeo in Italy, Audrey had no intention of moving to South Africa. She, therefore, was not investing at all in an imagined community there. She reported that Greg didn't plan on staying in Taiwan forever, but he had no intention of leaving any time soon and, at the time of our March 2010 interview, was actually planning to start his own business in Taiwan.

7.13 Conclusion to Audrey's Story

The tool metaphor is one that Audrey made constant reference to throughout this study when referring to all the languages in her linguistic repertoire. On the written questionnaire, she described Mandarin Chinese as "a tool that I can communicate with other people and express myself," English as "a tool to communicate with other people and part of my work," and Tai-yu as "a tool to communicate with my grandmother." Explaining her frequent use of this tool metaphor further, she told me, "It is like a key, and, like, if you want to open the

door, you have to get out the key. The key is a tool.” And for Audrey, likening languages to keys for opening doors is quite apt, for she had little interest in focusing on some aspect of any of her languages, such as literature or translation, as an area of specialization. Audrey’s personal development project instead involved filling her toolbox with various linguistic implements to aid her in achieving other goals that are non-linguistic in nature.

This is not to say that Audrey’s English abilities have not impacted her identity. For her, English is a tool for access – access to different communities, access to her goals, and access to making her voice heard. She has thus invested a considerable amount of time and effort in English itself. Her investment in English, however, pales in comparison to her investment in international communities, and her increased spoken English fluency has been a direct by-product of a large amount of investment in these communities. Her success in achieving access to international communities and having her voice heard and respected within these communities (where she claimed she could actually be herself more) has allowed her to see herself as distinct from most of her Taiwanese peers, and she recognized that it was her English that made this access possible.

Despite the fact that she is less proficient in French than in English, the French proficiency that she does have is enough to have a significant impact on her identity as well, for using French with any degree of proficiency is enough to make her stand out and feel special in Taiwan. Any proficiency she might gain in

Korean and Cantonese will, of course, make her stand out even more, despite the fact that Cantonese proficiency is something most Taiwanese would never desire.

For Audrey though, the addition of more languages to her already impressive linguistic repertoire is sure to be accompanied by a great deal of anguish.

Throughout this study, she already felt as if her various languages were competing, and that her Chinese had been negatively impacted by her use of English. Audrey didn't necessarily buy into the container metaphor where the brain is conceptualized as a container that can only hold a certain amount of linguistic information. If she had, she wouldn't have been planning to learn additional languages. It is, however, a fact that language abilities will be lost (but not unrecoverable) if they are not used somewhat regularly, and since there are just a finite number of hours in each day that one can use languages, Audrey is sure to constantly feel that she is losing some of one or more of her languages – especially if more languages are added to the mix.

Just as I was about to complete this chapter, however, I received an email message from Audrey informing me that Chinese attrition, at that moment anyway, no longer worried her. For this development, she credited not only her continued efforts to avoid language mixing, but also, somewhat ironically, an incident that, just a few months earlier, was causing her considerable grief – her employer's demand that she use more Chinese in her cram school lessons. In satisfying this demand, Audrey chose to continue explaining things to her students in English and immediately follow up these explanations with Chinese translations. "Because of the class i teach, i have more opportunity to practice the

fluency of both of the languages,” she wrote. “i have to explain things in English then do it again in Chinese and that really helps with my Chinese (or translation skills).”

On that positive note then, I will wrap up Audrey’s story – one that clearly showcases how English can be effectively used as a tool for community access, and how the increased linguistic proficiency resulting from engagement with various communities and sub-communities can substantially impact one’s identity. Despite the fact that Audrey did not feel English was truly *her* language, she most definitely personified other aspects of the typical L2 English speaker of the future predicted by Warschauer (2000), for throughout the duration of this study, she has indeed used English, together with technology, to express her identity and make her voice heard.

Chapter 8

Rachel's Story

Of all the stories told here, Rachel's is definitely the most tragic. Her misfortune began at the age of five months, when the death of her father ushered in a miserable childhood plagued by family politics and an abusive stepfather. As she put it, "My life started to be like this. Then the family situation never got good." Her story, however, is also one of hope and perseverance in which foreign languages played a substantial role in helping her overcome her adverse circumstances and become an independent young woman with an optimistic outlook for the future.

8.1 Life before Saint Agnes

After her father passed away when she was five months old, Rachel spent her earliest years living with his Tai-yu-speaking parents in a rural mountainous region of central Taiwan. The environment that her paternal grandparents raised her in throughout her toddler and preschool years was far from a loving and nurturing one. Their attitude toward their granddaughter was instead basically one of indifference. Rachel attributes this simply to the fact that she was female. "My grandparents from my father's side is a very traditional family," she told me. "They care more about boys rather than girls. Therefore, I don't have a role to play there."

When she was four years old, Rachel's mother remarried and took her to live with her new husband and his family in Taipei. From that point on, her grandparents' indifference was replaced with an environment of hostility and fear due to constant abuse by the man her mother married – her younger sister's father. "I started to live with them, and I felt it was a cold family," she recalled. "There's mental abuse and there's physical abuse in my childhood and I see my mother is treated not like a person, so I really hate – I really hate – my sister's father, and I feel this is a very bad family."

After leaving her grandparents' Tai-yu speaking household and moving to Taipei, it didn't take long before Rachel was communicating exclusively in Mandarin Chinese, even with her mother, who came from a Taiwanese background in Southern Taiwan and occasionally spoke Tai-yu with Rachel. "With my mother we talk more Mandarin – yeah, Chinese," she told me. "She talk sometimes Taiwanese, but I don't reply in Taiwanese. I reply in Chinese."

English instruction began fairly early for Rachel when her mother enrolled her in English cram school classes from the age of six. Her early experiences with English in these classes were very good ones, largely due to the stress-free manner of instruction. "I started to love English," she remembered, "because the way was better than now...singing, playing games – something like that." When she moved to Kaohsiung County with her mother, stepfather, and younger sister at the age of nine, she continued to attend English cram school classes, but found the instruction at cram schools in Southern Taiwan to be considerably less stimulating than what she had experienced in Taipei. "After I moved to Kaohsiung, I feel it's

not so good, so I a little bit lose interest,” she told me. “We changed some cram schools and we finally realized it is not so good because we lived in the countryside in Kaohsiung County.” When elementary school English instruction began for her in the fifth grade, the exclusive focus on grammar fairly well doused all the enthusiasm that she had had for English early on.

Throughout her six years of elementary school, Rachel changed schools four times. This lack of stability, she claimed, was not a problem for her. “I don’t have too much feeling about this moving because I was moving moving every time when I was in childhood,” she recalled. “For me, it was easy.” The lack of stability in her education also continued into junior high school, where she attended three different schools in as many years. In an attempt to remove Rachel from the abusive environment of their household, her mother arranged for her to stay with some relatives in Kaohsiung for her first year of junior high school. Rachel was not very close to these relatives and they did not get along particularly well, so she changed to another school the following year, living in the school’s dormitory. For her third and final year of junior high school, she changed schools yet again, this time staying with the paternal grandparents in central Taiwan that had raised her when she was very young. This year-long stay with her grandparents proved to be a very trying experience, for in addition to the aforementioned problem of these grandparents placing little value on a granddaughter, Rachel found herself embroiled in family politics – specifically, the long-standing tensions between her mother and her paternal grandparents. “They don’t really like my mother,” she explained. “Therefore, during the time I

lived there, they start to cut the connection between me and my mom. This made me feel uncomfortable.”

Rachel scored high enough on her high school entrance exams to attend a respectable normal high school, but like Audrey, she recognized that her strengths were in languages rather than math and science, which she would have needed to dedicate much time to at a regular Taiwanese high school. As she put it, “I don’t really like mathematic. I don’t really like science or something like this, but I know if I go to enter senior high, I need to learn all of these. And in junior high time, the better subject I got was English...That’s why I chose to go to Saint Agnes.” Her mother was supportive of this choice, but wanted Rachel to minor in Japanese, thinking that Taiwan’s extensive trade with Japan made this a far more valuable minor than the others offered. The class of English majors minoring in Japanese was already full, however, so Rachel chose French as her minor. Although her mother was disappointed, Rachel was delighted with the prospect of studying French due to the romantic image she had of France and the French language. “I didn’t really think too much about the future at that time,” she told me.

8.2 Early Years at Saint Agnes

At Saint Agnes, Rachel lived in the dormitory and, like Audrey, reported having a hard time adapting to having English as the language of instruction. Rachel’s approximation of how much she understood of what instructors said in English that first semester though – 30% – was even lower than Audrey’s

estimation of 40-50%. Like Gigi, Rachel was also quite intimidated by the English proficiency of classmates who had spent a considerable amount of time abroad. “It will be a bit tough for you to catch up in there, especially when you see your classmates who came back from the foreign country,” she told me. “They can really speak good English... You feel really stressed.” In spite of being intimidated by these classmates’ higher English proficiency though, Rachel felt that their presence in the classroom provided additional motivation to increase her own English proficiency, viewing their abilities as models that she herself could strive toward. “They were a model for me because I wanted to be like them – to think in English and to speak out in English,” she recalled. “I really wanted to be like them at that time.” Rachel saw in these classmates and their experiences abroad a future that could be her own – a possible future self that was not confined physically or emotionally to the island of Taiwan and possessing English abilities that would allow communication with the world.

Rachel reported that by her second semester at Saint Agnes, her listening abilities had increased substantially, and she could, by then, understand approximately 60-70% of what teachers said in class. When I was her teacher during her second year, Rachel’s English proficiency was already quite good. The love that she reported feeling for English when she first started cram school lessons in Taipei, but lost in later years, had definitely returned. This is evidenced by the letter of introduction she wrote to me on the first day of our first class that year – a letter that stood out from those of her classmates not only because of its greater length, but also the level of enthusiasm it displayed:

I love learning languages. Every kind of language for me is beautiful. That's because we communicate with people by languages. So it means if we know more languages then we can know more people from different countries. Learning languages to me is enjoying my life. Now I may not speak English or French very well, but I'd like to try my best. And I also hope you can give me more suggestions about learning English or you can suggest me some good English books. I want to know much more about English. Not only how to learn English well – also I want to know the thoughts of Americans and their culture. It'll help me to communicate with foreigners. And now I have some foreign friends. And talking to them is the most interesting thing in the world. I love speaking English very much!

From the start of that school year, Rachel's very extroverted personality and obvious zeal for learning English instantly distinguished her from other students. Her grades were consistently in the top quarter of the class, and hardly a class went by that she didn't ask multiple questions about some grammar point or vocabulary item. She also told me that for group presentations during her first three years at Saint Agnes, the fact that she was not at all shy about speaking English caused her to always be designated group spokesperson. "I'm not afraid to speak in front of everyone. I was always doing the job like as a speaker, and other people prepare information," she recalled.

Despite all her hard work and good grades, Rachel never received any encouragement or recognition of a job well done from her mother, whose

expectations for her always seemed impossible to achieve. “She doesn’t ever think I do well. Every time when I do something I am very happy with like in school from the first year to the third year, I do really good in my study...but it’s never enough for her,” Rachel lamented. “She never tells me I’m doing good.” Her mother’s impossibly high expectations and pressure were not restricted to academics or language learning though. Like any parent, Rachel’s mother wanted her daughter to be able to live a life free of hardship, and since so much of the hardship she herself had endured was inflicted by someone she relied on financially, her number one priority with Rachel was to make her strong and independent. In the following excerpt from our interview, Rachel explained this at some length:

My mother gave me not only the pressure to learn English...She gave me pressure more of life – economic independence, and uh – have good ability – not only English. Of course because I took English as my major, and French, so she requires a lot from me, but not only for the skill, but also for life, personality, a lot of things. I think it’s because she didn’t have a good education when she was young, and she didn’t have a good experience with marriage, and she has no good experience with family, so she wants me to be very independent because she doesn’t want me to get hurt from all of these, and she thinks only being independent can be far away from the other people’s influence. That’s why she gives me lots of pressure.

For Rachel's mother, it was vitally important for Rachel to gain marketable skills that would ensure her financial independence, but this alone was not enough. She wanted her daughter to also become emotionally strong enough that she never needed to rely on anyone else for anything – financial or otherwise.

Rachel also identified another factor that could have contributed to her mother's excessively high expectations for her – the fact that, for her mother, Rachel is the only remnant of her father's legacy. "They knew each other for a long time and they had just married... They had been married four years and then my father passed away," she told me. "She was really sad. Until now, I think she still feels sad. That's why she put a lot of pressure on me – because she thinks I'm the only remain from my father. Yeah, I think she take it this way too."

Regardless of her mother's reasons for having unrealistically high expectations for her, Rachel, for many years, deeply resented the pressure and lack of encouragement from her mother. One issue her mother was particularly quick to discourage was the prospect of Rachel ever being able to study abroad, or take part in one of the homestay trips to foreign countries that Saint Agnes regularly organized for students during school breaks. "When you study at Saint Agnes, you like to go abroad to study. You like to – like other students, you know – go with school for two months or exchange student," Rachel explained. "I know I have the ability to do it – exchange student to France, to Venice, or to New Zealand – whatever. But my mom say, 'no money,' so every time when I talk about this topic, she keep quiet and she is angry. She think that I don't understand my situation. Why I still talk about this topic? She says it is never possible for

her to afford me to go abroad.” Actually well aware of her mother’s financial situation, Rachel was not looking for her mother to pay for her to go abroad as much as simply get some hopeful words of encouragement from her – something akin to “Maybe one day you’ll be able to go somewhere like that.” What she got instead, whenever the issue came up, was a blunt declaration that such a trip would never be possible for her. “This made me feel hurt,” she recalled. “I just want to be like other students. I think it’s also a key point in my life – the attitude from my mother – she doesn’t encourage me.”

Even though she had not lived at her stepfather’s house since elementary school, Rachel did go there to see her mother and sister with some regularity throughout her first and most of her second year at Saint Agnes. By the end of her second year, however, the arguments and violence there became too much for her to bear, and she decided then never to return. “Afterwards I have never been back to the house,” she told me. “I stay at my rented place, and my mother – sometimes I have some time and I meet her to have dinner. Not too much.”

8.3 Dreams Coming True

In our May 2009 interview, Rachel informed me that when she wrote in her letter of introduction that she had some foreign friends (“and talking to them is the most interesting thing in the world”), she was referring mostly to one particular French friend who would become her boyfriend a few short months later. He was working as a programmer at a company in the area and spoke very little Chinese. Their communication was, therefore, entirely in English. “In the beginning, when

we hang out, I'd take an electronic dictionary, and I'd check it...It was really a good experience," she remembered. By the second semester of that year, they had become a couple, and with this new relationship, Rachel found her dreams of regular interaction with foreigners realized. "I always dreamt that one day I can hang out with foreigners and I can speak English," she told me. "And one day, after I knew my boyfriend for half a year, my dream has come true – because I keep speaking English every day...I really improve a lot in English." Indeed, the future self she had envisioned for herself a year earlier had become a reality – she was speaking English to her boyfriend daily and becoming much more fluent. Her circle of foreign friends also grew as her boyfriend introduced her to some Canadians, Americans, and fellow Frenchmen. "After I knew him, I knew some foreign friends and my life became different – change – became more social with foreigners," she said. "So my English was getting better."

With daily practice using English, Rachel's fluency did increase dramatically, and with that came increased confidence. "Afterwards, I have more confidence in myself too – to speak English, and uh – to do more," she told me. "I joined some activities and some contests too." Rachel was actually working on the organizational side of many activities during her third and fourth year at Saint Agnes. As a member of the school's English Department Association, for example, she helped organize events sponsored by the English department. During her fourth year, she also became active in another organization that was responsible for orchestrating the reception of visitors to the campus. These visitors included representatives from the Ministry of Education, such as

accreditation committees, and attendees of conferences held on the Saint Agnes campus. “I was the vice-leader of this group,” Rachel informed me. “And in this organization, I really learned a lot and got a lot of resources.” During the same time period, she also participated in many English speech contests. Although she never won any prizes at these events, doing so was never her real objective. “I would say I won the experience,” she remarked. “I just wanted to, you know, always train myself.” As she relayed these experiences, I was struck again and again by the degree and intensity that Rachel embraced the enterprise culture project of continuous self-development, and her recognition that the responsibility for directing this project of always training herself was hers alone.

Although she still received some financial assistance from her mother, paternal grandparents, and French boyfriend (who she lived with for her third and fourth year at Saint Agnes), Rachel did begin, during this period, to start working toward financial independence. In the first semester of her third year, she got a part-time job at an insurance company and worked at this job for about two months. After leaving the insurance company job, she started conducting private tutoring lessons – something she would continue doing off and on throughout her third and fourth year at Saint Agnes. “I just found the parents who wanted a tutor – English tutor,” she told me. “And I went to their house.” She described preparing for and conducting these tutoring sessions as quite tiring. “Grammar, listening, speaking – everything...I prepared the textbook by my own – preparing the content by my own,” she recalled. “You need to do everything by your own.”

Another of Rachel's dreams finally came true during the summer between her third and fourth year at Saint Agnes, when she was finally able, with her boyfriend's financial assistance, to go abroad to France. When I asked her if her mother objected to her boyfriend paying for the majority of her travel expenses, Rachel replied, "She was not so fine in the beginning...because Taiwanese thought that it's not good to receive from your boyfriend – from other people – the help." Eventually, however, her mother accepted the idea. "She knows my boyfriend well – really well," she told me. "They got a really good relationship, so she finally accept."

Rachel spent the first month of her trip to France with her boyfriend and his family in the South of France, where they all stayed at houses of friends and relatives. At the end of this month, her boyfriend returned to his job in Taiwan, but Rachel remained in France for another month, attending language classes and staying with a French family in a homestay program. "It was a really good chance for me," she said, "because I always stayed with a French family...so I'm really in their lives."

These two months in France proved to be a very significant experience for Rachel, as it was on this trip that she truly fell in love with the French language and culture. When I asked her what it was that affected her so much about French culture during this trip, she replied, "Many things, like the buildings, the art, and how the people live in France – the lifestyle, everything!" She reported being especially impressed by the French practice of having leisurely late-night dinners with an *apertif* beforehand. The *apertif*, generally some light alcoholic drink

served with cheese, was especially noteworthy for Rachel due to the relaxed conversation that accompanied it. “These things take like an hour, and we just keep talking, and we can be exchanging real thought – everything,” she enthusiastically remembered. “I really like it. It seemed really relaxed – compared to Taiwan at least. We are always in rush.” The French people that Rachel shared these leisurely *apertifs* with also impressed her with how knowledgeable they seemed to be about the world. “French people know not only about themselves or their job or something. They know many things about this world and they study a lot,” she commented. To illustrate this, she told me about playing a game with trivia questions that had been packaged inside cubes of cheese. “They just pose a question – a question that’s, like, culture things, history, or some favorite things, but mostly it’s geography things,” she explained. “And they all get it right!” She went on to contrast French knowledge of this sort of information with the knowledge of typical Taiwanese, telling me, “If you come back to Taiwan, you will never find these things.”

While she had done well in her three years of French classes at Saint Agnes prior to this trip, she felt her communicative abilities in French were severely lacking due to the emphasis her French classes had placed on grammar knowledge. “Learning French from first year to third year, I did really well,” she reported. “I was really proud of myself. I did really well on paper. I did well on grammar...but not speaking. Not speaking. Not listening. This is Taiwan culture, you know. Always foreign language is always grammar. I really feel so, and I really feel very pity of this.” The trip to France, however, served to quickly

increase her proficiency in these communicative aspects of language. “After I come back...I really feel I could speak good French,” she told me. “The first month, no. The first month, I feel listening listening listening, but the second month, I feel really I can speak very good.”

Upon returning from her trip to France, she quickly began to feel that her increased proficiency in French was short-lived, and that she was rapidly forgetting all that she had learned. “I think that language needs an environment to push it,” she explained. At this point, she was living with her French boyfriend, but just as with Gigi and her Italian boyfriend, their communication continued to be mostly in English. In their Discourse community of two, the Discourse norm of English communication had, after all, long since been firmly established, and attempts to change to French would no doubt have seemed forced and unnatural.

8.4 Second French Trip and Fifth Year at Saint Agnes

The following summer, between her fourth and fifth year at Saint Agnes, Rachel went to France again for another two months, and was then, in just a few weeks, able to regain all the proficiency she had lost. “First month, you know, I forgot a lot of words,” she reported. “I feel, ‘Oh my God!’ and really ‘I cannot speak anymore!’ but for maybe a half month – one and a half month – I take back my language. And before I left France, I could speak very good French.” As could be expected, she once again started to lose some of her French after returning from this second trip. She didn’t feel that her attrition this time, however, was as great as it had been the year before. “Until now, I forget a little

bit of French, but better than the first time when I came back from France,” she told me in our May 2009 interview, about eight months after her return from her second trip.

The relative lack of French depreciation that Rachel experienced after returning from her second trip can be attributed to the fact that she did indeed find an environment within Taiwan that could “push” her French skills. After returning from France, breaking up with her French boyfriend, and briefly working for less than a month at an American-owned bar where she mostly spoke English with her employers and foreign patrons, Rachel was able to land a job at an international investment company that employed quite a few people from France. “My first full-time job⁴⁷, I need to know French. That’s what made me keep up by myself to using French,” she said. “The French people, they help me a lot in French...I mean co-worker – French co-worker...That’s why I could have a meeting in French. Before – no. Maybe English only.” French use then played a major role in this workplace community. Mandarin Chinese and English were also used routinely, but for interaction with foreign colleagues and clients, English use was mostly restricted to email. Rachel also reported a bit of Tai-yu use at this workplace among Taiwanese co-workers.

The influence of the French people in Rachel’s life has by no means been restricted to the enhancement and maintenance of her French language skills, for when I met her for our May 2009 interview, I instantly identified the accent she had when she spoke English as a French one. When I commented on this, she

⁴⁷ Although she referred to this job as “full-time,” Rachel actually did not put in full-time hours there. The compensation, however, was in fact in-line with what full-time office jobs in Kaohsiung typically paid. “They gave me full-time pay for part-time work,” she later clarified.

laughed and replied, “Some teachers say that...It’s the influence of the French people.” Since the most significant English interaction in her life was with her former boyfriend from France, Rachel’s French accent should, I suppose, come as no surprise. I certainly hadn’t detected any hint of French influence in her pronunciation back in her second year at Saint Agnes, when she was just beginning her relationship with him. Interestingly, she reported that French friends and teachers find her French pronunciation to be surprisingly ‘native-like.’ “When I speak French, they say I don’t get too much accent – Chinese accent – when I speak,” she informed me.

When Rachel and I had our first interview in May of 2009, however, her job at the international investment company had just become a casualty of the global economic recession that was still, at that time, showing no signs of abating. The company had been forced to close and her French co-workers, who she considered friends, had returned to France. Without the regular workplace French interaction she had grown accustomed to, she was then, once again, feeling that her French proficiency was slipping. “I think I’m losing it day by day,” she told me. She was, at that time, still taking a few elective French courses at Saint Agnes – French film and French translation classes – and the instructor for one of these classes was giving her some helpful words of encouragement. “My French teacher says I still speak good, so he encourage me a lot,” she reported. When I asked her if she generally felt good about her French abilities at that time, her response tellingly showcased the tendency in all of us to assess ourselves and our

abilities relative to those around us. “Not really good, but fine,” she told me. “Better than others, I can say.”

Rachel, at the time of that interview, was focusing on completing her final few months of studies at Saint Agnes and trying to find another job. With all her foreign friends and former co-workers no longer in Taiwan, she reported having little opportunity to ever use French or English outside the classroom. Since she was extremely busy, especially when she was still employed and also going to school, she seldom socialized or went to bars where she might have some interaction with foreigners. She did have a Facebook page, but lacked the free time to spend online that many of her classmates did. On her few Facebook wall posts, however, she could be seen communicating in English to foreign friends and in both English and Chinese to Saint Agnes classmates. In a brief message to one former Saint Agnes classmate shortly after graduation, for instance, she wrote “miss you my dear you become more and more beautiful.”

8.5 Future Plans as of May 2009 Interview

Unlike most of her Saint Agnes classmates, Rachel had no plans of returning to school in her immediate future – at least not to pursue another degree. One reason for this is that her financial situation would not permit such an endeavor. In addition though, she felt that the best path for her was to gain as much practical on-the-job experience as possible, continuing her ongoing self-development project with a constant eye on her long-term goal of living and working in France.

In her final years at Saint Agnes, Rachel had taken some elective business courses, such as English Business Writing, and although she felt she had benefited from these courses, she also recognized some discrepancies between what was taught there and practices she was concurrently engaging in at her jobs in the real-life business world. “I learned some skill from English Business Writing, but in the reality, I really feel we don’t use so formal words,” she told me. “We use more casual way to ask for information and reply, so I feel that the school – what the school teaches – is not really so useful....They teach well in literature or writing, grammar, English speaking...but for the real skill, like business or other skill, not so well. They don’t have a good teacher to teach us. The teacher is more literature, so even though they teach business or business writing, they don’t teach, I feel, the reality.” She then qualified these comments by noting that she did have one teacher who was actually involved in the present-day business world. This teacher, who taught a Chinese International Trade class, served to validate Rachel’s feelings about what she was learning in the English Business Writing class when she showed him something she had been working on for that class. “The Chinese International Trade teacher told me, ‘No, we don’t use these sentences anymore!’” she recalled. “And I took the same question back to this English writing class. The teacher said, ‘No, you need to know the formal way!’ That’s the difference between the English teacher and the business teacher.”

Rather than spend valuable time taking business courses that may be of questionable value in the real business world, Rachel intended to immediately find another business-related job, preferably in international trade, and amass as

much practical experience and product knowledge as she could. “I will try to have more and more [on-the-job experiences] because even if you do international trade, if you enter different company, there are many different things you need to know from the beginning,” she said. “So I want to have many variety of experience in international trade to know more about more products.” Rachel here again displays her commitment to the enterprise culture project of upgrading her skills, expanding her flexibility, and generally enhancing the ‘Rachel brand.’ By building her resume and stockpile of practical knowledge this way, she hoped to not only increase her marketability, but also position herself well to eventually achieve her goal of living and working in France ten years later. “I do this to help me to find a job in France,” she told me, “because I really want to live in France and work there...I hope, at the age of 30, I can go to France to have a better job, but before that, maybe I will try to find a company – maybe it’s a French company. It will make me feel I’m closer to France and have more chance to work in France.”

When I asked Rachel what languages besides Mandarin Chinese she thought she would likely use in her next job, she replied, “Certainly English. I think English – and I hope French, yes.” Even if this next job does not involve the use of French though, she planned to do whatever she could to maintain her French proficiency. “If not in the work, myself, I will take classes – a course in French,” she told me. “I don’t want to stop it – because I know that my dream is France, not English.”

In her more long-term dreams of living and working in France ten years down the road though, Rachel still envisioned herself speaking quite a bit of English. “Doing business, you won’t work only in France,” she told me. “Even if you only work in France, you need to cooperate with other countries, so you need to speak English, so English also for me.” Although she hadn’t yet begun learning Japanese, she told me that she planned to start studying this language soon, and envisioned herself perhaps speaking Japanese in France as well. “Japan has a lot of business with France, so I would like to learn Japanese to get more opportunities,” she explained. “I think Japanese will be my next language.”

Once in France, ten years or so in the future, Rachel envisioned herself in a position of some authority, leading and guiding subordinates. “I want to be a manager,” she said. “I always want to be a manager. I think I have ability to be a leader and I want to do it. And I also like business trade, so I want to be a business trade manager – to have a team to work together, to organize a team, to achieve goals.” With her use of such buzz phrases as “to achieve goals” and her relentless desire to continuously “train” herself, Rachel truly appeared poised for enterprise culture success. And she did indeed rate herself highly in the three entrepreneurial self characteristics on the written questionnaire. She gave herself a 4 (with 5 being the top rating) for each quality – self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals. Although she reported being very comfortable with boldly promoting herself and her abilities in an interview situation, she felt that this may not be the right approach to take with many Taiwanese companies which still value modesty above all else. As she explained:

I feel I did well on my resume. I've really learned a lot. I'm really proud of myself, but if I show too much, you know, with this, they think, "You are young. You don't need to talk like this."...Some people, they think this way. So I think this depends on different culture from a different company because every company, they got their own culture...and I think if it is a foreign company, they will give you more space. I mean more space to show your ability.

Even in some of the more traditional Taiwanese companies though, she did feel that things were changing. "I think even in some traditional Taiwanese company, they receive lots of western culture," she told me. "So they are willing to have an employee who is very aggressive – who is promoting themselves." This, however, was not what she had encountered at the job she had just lost. "For me, the last job – international trade – it's one that feels more traditional," she said. "They want people who can do a job good, but more quiet – I mean not showing off...but you need to show your ability – ability, but not too much."

8.6 Tai-yu

Rachel related one interview experience to me in which the modest approach she chose proved to be not at all what the interviewer was looking for. In this instance, it was not her business or foreign language abilities Rachel was being modest about though, but instead her Taiyu proficiency. She explained:

[The interviewer] was a Taiwanese, but she married a French, and they live in Taiwan. They opened a company to import the red wine and sell,

and I had an interview there. This woman, she talked first in Chinese of course, and then French. After, she interviewed me in Taiwanese and she said, “Can you speak Taiwanese?” I said yes, but I said “not so well,” but she said, ‘You are Taiwanese. Why you cannot speak good Taiwanese?’

Rachel now totally agreed with this view. At a different point in our interview, commenting on the necessity of knowing Taiyu in the business world of Southern Taiwan, she told me, “You need to speak Taiwanese, of course, for business. And I think this is the culture because if you are Taiwanese, you need to speak both Taiwanese and Chinese.” She was not at all confident, however, about her Tai-yu proficiency. She reported that for many years when she was younger, she was actually quite ashamed to speak Tai-yu. This attitude started to change, however, after she met her French ex-boyfriend. As she explained:

Before that, I am really like other Taiwanese girls. I like foreign stuff. I like American movies, French stuff, and it’s just like following, and I lose my own culture. I feel Taiwan – not good. Taiwan – small island, you know. But after I knew my ex-boyfriend – knew more foreign friends – I feel that I need to respect myself. I need to respect my culture – own culture. Therefore other people can respect me. They don’t like people that just follow their culture. You can like their culture, but you need to love your culture first, and I realized this is important for me.

During her first trip to France, Rachel found that Tai-yu could also be used as a means of expressing her Taiwanese identity, distinguishing herself from Mainland Chinese. She asserted:

The Taiwanese makes me – makes us – different. When I went to France, I really feel this is a way to introduce my country – to make people know that Taiwan is different from China... So this is a way that I introduce myself. I will introduce both Taiwanese and Chinese, and I will make them figure out the differences between Taiwanese and Chinese.

When traveling abroad, Tai-yu served to index Rachel's Taiwanese identity – something she hadn't felt much of a need to do in Taiwan even as she was coming to appreciate Taiwanese culture more, since displaying a distinctly Taiwanese identity in Southern Taiwan hardly distinguishes one from the masses there. In France, where she was likely to be seen as just another Chinese (or even more generally as just another Asian), the need to distinguish herself took on a far greater significance, and she found that Tai-yu helped illustrate her distinctly Taiwanese identity to those she was meeting for the first time. Likening her own experience to that of her interviewer at the wine importing company, she said:

After I have been to France, I feel Taiwanese is really important. I think she got the same experience as me, so that's why we think again the importance of Taiwanese... She married French, so I think people who have been to foreign country to live there or to have some experience like that, they will come back to Taiwan

and they will take more importance of this Taiwanese culture.

It was not until she worked her first job at the insurance company though that she started to realize how necessary Tai-yu was for business in Southern Taiwan. “I need to make phone calls about the claims, and some claims, they speak Taiwanese and I cannot speak good Taiwanese,” she remembered. “That’s where I think I need to improve my Taiwanese.”

Although she acknowledged that it put a great deal of pressure on children, Rachel was in favor of the recent addition of Tai-yu to the elementary school curriculum. “They need to learn Taiwanese,” she told me. Even children from families of Mainlander origin, who have had no experience speaking Tai-yu in the home, would benefit, she felt, from such instruction. “Of course they need,” she remarked, “because I think for living, you will use Taiwanese. It’s always better to know more rather than know less.” Rachel also told me that she intended to encourage any children she might have in the future to learn Tai-yu, but stressed that she would not pressure them to do so if they were at all resistant to the idea. “No no, not like this,” she said, bristling at the thought of applying the sort of pressure she experienced from her own mother. “Be free – because I would like to be free, so I would like them to be free.”

8.7 Mandarin Chinese

When I asked Rachel if Mandarin Chinese was more important to her than Tai-yu, she replied, “For right now, yes – because I cannot speak so good Taiwanese. I don’t really put a lot of effort into learning Taiwanese.” The feeling that she

lacks proficiency in Tai-yu relative to Mandarin Chinese then, makes her feel much closer to Mandarin Chinese. Relative to other languages as well, Rachel ranked Mandarin Chinese as most important, largely due to the ease with which she could express herself in the language. “For Chinese, I think it means a lot for me,” she reported, “because even though I can speak English and even though I can speak French, Chinese is the only one I can express real – real and deep – feeling.”

8.8 English and French

As for English, it was her fluency that Rachel believed made her stand out in Taiwan, where the majority of young people, despite much English instruction, are very reluctant to speak. She cited one instance where her fluency was recognized:

One time I encouraged one girl. We were in a nightclub with my friends and she could not speak good English and we’re speaking English with foreign friends and we were chatting. And she came to us...She also wants to speak English like this, but she cannot, and me and my friend, we encourage her to speak more and to not be afraid to make mistakes.

Where fluency is concerned, Rachel also reported positioning herself as expert to help her younger sister become more confident about speaking. “Also my sister,” she told me. “I try to help my sister to not be afraid to speak more.”

Although French and English did both greatly affect the way she saw herself, the affiliations Rachel had in May of 2009 with these two languages were very different. She associated French very strongly with the country of France and its culture – practices she experienced and fell in love with while there, such as late night leisurely dinners with *apertif*. “When I speak French, I really feel I am in love with this language, this culture, this country,” she told me. Her affiliation with English, in contrast, was, at this time, not associated with any particular country or culture. “I think English is more like an international language because everyone needs to learn it right now,” she explained. “And so for me, it’s more like necessity – worldwide. But French, not everyone needs to speak it.”

In contrast with French, Rachel stressed that in Taiwan today, English abilities are absolutely essential. “You must speak it in Taiwan. It’s the situation,” she asserted. “For the young people – 20 or 30 – they need to have English skill. The situation requires them to do this.” She maintained that in the Taiwanese job market, someone with little English proficiency would have very few opportunities. “I really feel that if you want to have a good job, you really need,” she said. “It’s a requirement...so you cannot say anything. You need to accept it.” For Rachel, English mastery was indeed a central aspect of the enterprise culture self-improvement project, and any resistance to the pervasiveness of English in Taiwanese society would be certain to hinder one’s self-development and chances of success.

Besides viewing English as important and necessary, Rachel also strongly associated the language with upward mobility. “Higher income,” she stated. “I

always think relative to economic – a good life.” She acknowledged, however, that in a society where this view is shared by most people and increasing numbers of people are becoming quite fluent in English, additional skills are necessary to truly stand out when competing for employment. Increasing her business expertise, her French, and perhaps one day, Japanese, would, she was certain, give her an advantage over her competition. “If you have a second language, or three languages, you’ll be fine,” she told me, “because everyone right now, basically they can speak English.”

It definitely cannot be said, however, that everyone can basically speak French. The ability to speak any amount of French in Taiwan is, in fact, enough to make someone stand out, and Rachel considered her French to be better than that of most of her classmates. Like Audrey, she was often positioned as a French expert by classmates seeking her assistance with the language. “Of course I have a lot of my classmates who I need to teach them French,” she told me. Although it may not be entirely conscious, her French accented English also served to index her strong affiliation with the French language and culture, and she was not at all ashamed of it in spite of the fact that it had cost her some opportunities. “That’s why I’m not easy to get a job offered to teach English in a cram school – because they feel I’ve got some accent – not an American accent, not a British accent, but a strange accent for me,” she reported. “I tried to have interview in a cram school last year when I was finding a full-time job or hiring contract, and it’s not really so easy for me... They want a standard accent, but not a French accent.”

8.9 Concern for her Mother

Although Rachel's mother may have felt that all the pressure she had exerted on Rachel as she was growing up had paid off, making her skilled and financially independent, Rachel reported in our May 2009 interview that she thought her mother had come to believe this had come at a cost. As she explained:

At the same time, when I've really become what she wants, I think she feels she lost something...She feels she lost a daughter who can be home and who can care about her. But, you know, I have already become like this kind of person. I can't really come back to an innocent daughter or something...I have a good ability. I can be economically independent, but she thinks I'm selfish. She doesn't think I care really a lot about family. I think more about me – to move to where and to work where.

Rachel, however, really was constantly thinking about the well-being of her mother, who, at the time of our May 2009 interview, had recently developed serious health problems and, having left her abusive husband, could not rely on him for financial support. The hope that she would one day be able to provide a better life for her mother had, in fact, been an important motivation for Rachel ever since the day she had long ago vowed never to return to her stepfather's house. "After that, I tell myself I need to be very strong and I need to be economically independent," she said. "Therefore, I can have a better life with my mom." She told me that she dreamed of a future where she would be able to provide a comfortable life for her mother – one in which all the financial

problems that had burdened her all her life would no longer be a concern and she would perhaps be free to pursue her own education. Rachel explained:

I think she's a good learner because she always learns even if she has no time – even if she is tired, even if she is uncomfortable – she tries to learn... That's why I really hope this time she can really go out from the house to live for herself. Yeah, I know she would be a good learner.

Rachel also told me in May of 2009 that she had set aside the feelings of resentment she harbored for so long over the pressure her mother had given her growing up. She recalled:

Before, I could not forgive her – Why she give me so much pressure? But right now, I feel this is normal because she also got a lot of pressure... I don't think it's her fault... I just think this is my life and everyone got a different life, so if my life is this, I need to face it and I need to overcome.

Rachel's adoption of this more mature outlook is in keeping with her other strong entrepreneurial self qualities. Taking full responsibility for one's predicaments in life is, after all, the trait that is perhaps most valued in enterprise culture. For Rachel, this new outlook also came with the belief that despite the lack of encouraging words, her mother had ultimately come to respect her desires, dreams, and independence. "I think if I decide anything, even if she does not really totally agree, I think she will respect me," Rachel said.

8.10 Life After Graduation

Although Rachel had worked for several years while attending Saint Agnes, being out of school and devoting her efforts solely to work really had a strong impact on her. “You start to work, and then world change. It’s so different, and you are really in the society,” she told me when we met for our second interview in March of 2010. “Even though I just graduated like about a year, I feel I’m far off from school – for like many years already.” Rachel’s complete entry into the workforce, however, was not the only change in her life after graduating from Saint Agnes. She experienced a physical change of location, moving from Kaohsiung to Taipei, and her affiliation with the English language underwent a fairly dramatic change as well.

8.10.1 Job Interviews

When we met in May of 2009, Rachel had already sent her resume to numerous companies in Taipei, Taichung, and Kaohsiung. Shortly after that, she was invited to interview at seven of these companies, and she was able to arrange for all these interviews to take place during the same week, with those in Taipei being conducted first, followed by interviews in Taichung, and then finally returning to Kaohsiung for interviews there. Rachel reported that in each of these job interviews, she chose to boldly promote herself and her abilities:

I always promote myself. You need to sell yourself to the company.

That’s why I worked so hard in the school time...I want to get as much

as I can – the experience – because I know one day – every time – when I’m fighting finding a good job, I need to sell myself.

When I reminded her that in May of 2009, just a few weeks before she had these job interviews, she had not been so certain that this would be the right approach to take in all interview situations, Rachel told me that her initial experiences in Taipei at the start of her week-long interview tour had served to convince her that aggressive self-promotion was indeed the way to go for subsequent interviews as well. She acknowledged that in Taichung and Kaohsiung, there were still companies that would take the traditional attitude of valuing modesty over entrepreneurial self qualities, but she asserted that this was not at all the case in Taipei. As she explained:

In Taipei, they focus more on uh – they don’t care – nobody care about your education. They all took my work experience as, like, hot point. But they want to see if this person is really aggressive, you know. And uh – how you more uh – perform – her or himself in front of an interviewer. If you are really comfortable speaking and very confident, they like it. Taipei company, they like it...

That’s why I think I’m more good in Taipei.

And Rachel’s aggressive self-promotion in these interviews really did prove to be the correct course of action, for doing so not only resulted in her landing one job. She was actually offered all seven of the positions she interviewed for! “I got them all!” she proudly informed me.

Rachel's experiences with these interviews and her observation that her interviewers were far more interested in her work experience than her education suggests not only that employers in Taiwan may be adopting the values of enterprise culture, but also that, as they do so, they could be placing less emphasis on the prestige of the schools applicants graduated from. Abelman *et al.* (2009) contend that university ranking is one factor that still plays a powerful role in determining success in Korean society, and Korean university students' tendency to take full personal responsibility for their lot in life works to mask this structural inequality. While Saint Agnes is highly respected and renowned in Taiwan for its foreign language instruction, it by no means carries anywhere near the prestige of any of the high-ranking national universities. The fact that Rachel, without graduating from a national university, was able to get seven job offers at the height of a recession, when competition was likely to have been especially fierce, indicates that the situation in Taiwan may differ from that of South Korea.

8.10.2 A Quick Succession of Jobs

Rachel, then, had her choice of seven positions that all seemed quite attractive to her. Although all these positions involved international sales and marketing, only one of them was with a foreign (American) company. The other six were Taiwanese. All seven required the use of English. The offer she decided to accept was an account manager position with a renewable energy company. Even though this job actually did not pay as well as some of the others did, Rachel was attracted to the idea of working in a progressive industry like renewable energy.

Since this company employed many Europeans and catered mostly to European clients, Rachel routinely used English at this job. As she explained:

I used a lot of English because I was the account manager. I deal with um – the foreigner um – the foreign inquiry, and we deal with mostly the western countries – Europe. So I respond mail – everything – and we also got the foreign co-worker – my co-workers. I always worked with them.

Although she found this job enjoyable and rewarding, Rachel ended up working there for only two months – mostly due to her amorous boss. “I got some problem with my boss when I was there,” she told me. “My boss kind of likes me or something, so I feel this is not a good place to stick with.” Sexual harassment, of course, represents the sort of instance where gender can constrain the workplace success of even the most model representatives of enterprise culture. Rachel, however, was able to make the strength and flexibility of ‘brand Rachel’ work to her advantage and quickly obtain new employment.

Upon deciding to leave the renewable energy company, a co-worker there introduced Rachel to an IC (Integrated Circuit) company. This newly-founded company was based in China, but was Taiwanese owned and had a sales office in Taipei. Rachel was hired to work in the Taipei sales office selling electronic components. She did well at this job and even got to travel to the company’s headquarters in China, but ultimately ended up staying for only two months at this job as well, for she found a similar position with a higher salary. This was the job that Rachel was still holding when we had our March 2010 interview. At that

point, she had been at this position, her third since moving to Taipei, for almost five months. Although the thought of bouncing from job to job as she did over the course of just a few months sounded quite nerve-wracking to me, Rachel insisted that the transitions had actually been quite smooth. “I didn’t really have a tough time,” she commented. “I just changed and changed.”

8.10.3 Selling Thermal Fans

Like the second job that Rachel held in Taipei, her third was with a Taiwanese company based in China with a sales office in Taipei. In contrast to the company’s headquarters in China, which employed eighty engineers, the Taipei office, according to Rachel, was miniscule. “We got only three people here – my manager and I and my assistant,” she informed me. While this company was also part of the IC industry, it specialized in a particular component – thermal fans. When we talked in March of 2010, Rachel was still studying up on the technical aspects of the thermal fans she was selling, and was not yet able to go alone for face-to-face sales meetings with potential clients. “They talk about something really professional skill stuff and technical stuff that I cannot really understand, so I always go with my manager,” she explained. “The plan is I’ll be dependent [on the manager] like a half year – like after June, I need to go alone to win customers.”

Even though she still had some learning to do regarding the technical aspects of the products she was hawking, Rachel was quite happy with this job and told me that she planned to stick with it for at least two years if all went well. “It’s really

challenging – a really challenging job,” she reported. “And my manager gave me a not bad – a really not bad salary...for my age, quite high.” She also reported being quite pleased with the amount of freedom this position granted her. “I got a lot of um – authority and free time to do what I want to do – I mean for the job,” she told me. “I got my own idea and I can do something uh – I can do it in my own way for sales.” This job then satisfied in Rachel the need that, according to Miller & Rose (1990), the entrepreneurial self constantly craves – “to fulfil his or her potential through strivings for autonomy, creativity and responsibility” (p. 27).

Although Rachel’s sales efforts, at the time of our March 2010 interview, were focused mostly on the domestic Taiwanese market, she estimated that about ten percent of her time on the job was spent using English with existing and prospective European and American customers. When I asked her if she had any French customers, she replied, “I don’t have a chance yet, but I’m creating the chance.” She then explained to me that she had recently been exerting much effort gathering information on companies in France and other European countries, sending out emails to these companies introducing her company and products. “You cannot just sit here and wait for the inquiry,” she asserted. “In Europe – all over the world, they use the thermal fan, so I just need to find it.” These comments serve to further highlight the extent to which Rachel found it necessary to take personal responsibility for her own success and the achievement of her goals.

Since Rachel, in our May 2009 interview, had expressed an interest in learning Japanese for the purposes of making herself more marketable, I asked her if she

had made any attempts to do so. “No, I think this is also a change,” she replied. “Maybe next year, I will start learning Spanish because Spanish is used a lot all over the world.” Since our first interview, Rachel had, in the various jobs she had held during those ten months, seen first-hand the practical benefits of speaking Spanish. “Some of my co-workers, they work with Spanish customers – Spanish speaking customers,” she told me. “So I think it’s very useful.” If one is looking at the global market and assessing the relative worth of languages in terms of numbers of potential customers, Japanese would, of course, only offer a fraction of the value that Spanish would. And if Rachel were to gain any degree of proficiency in Spanish, she would indeed be tremendously marketable in the business world, for a speaker of English, Mandarin Chinese, and Spanish would have the ability to communicate with a gargantuan percentage of the world’s population. ‘Brand Rachel’ would be a highly flexible brand indeed.

In her domestic Taiwanese sales interactions, Rachel found her Tai-yu abilities to be quite useful, reducing the social distance between herself and some customers – especially in Southern Taiwan. “Two weeks ago, I went to Kaohsiung to meet one of my customers,” she recalled. “I speak only Taiwanese, and I still can understand and communicate with them, so I think it went fine.” Although she wasn’t certain, Rachel thought that maybe Tai-yu use for sales could be helping her Tai-yu improve a bit since prior to using Tai-yu in such interactions, she was basically only using it in occasional communication with her grandparents.

8.10.4 Teaching English

When Gigi quit her job teaching at the Taipei cram school, she was asked to find her own replacement to take over her teaching duties there, and when she told Rachel about this, Rachel immediately volunteered. When we met for our March 2010 interview, she had just a few days earlier taught this class for the first time. “At first when I want to get this job, I took it like a part-time job. I wanted to make extra money,” she told me. “But from the first class, I feel I like teaching! I do!”

Since Rachel shared Gigi’s distaste for English instruction with a focus on grammar, I was curious about whether Rachel, at this early stage of her teaching experience anyway, had been able to reconcile, in some way that Gigi could not, the fact that she was expected to engage in a practice that she herself disagreed with. Rachel had, in fact, justified this contradiction by viewing the teaching of this class as an opportunity for her to learn – to not only improve her teaching skills, but also her own knowledge of English grammar. She also acknowledged that she was not cut out for the sort of active English instruction with singing, dancing, and games that had appealed so much to her when she was young. “I know I am not able to teach these little kids dance or to sing with them, so grammar would be a better choice for me,” she explained. “I can also improve my own English...I know my grammar is not good, so I need to prepare because I don’t want to fail my students.” Thus, Rachel was able to rationalize her classroom focus on grammar by thinking of it as part of her personal development project.

Although Rachel had tutored students in one-on-one situations, she maintained that teaching an actual class with multiple students was a very different experience – and one she greatly preferred. Tutoring, she told me, “was more tiring and not so interesting.” This assessment was, of course, based only on her experience teaching one lesson and it remained to be seen how she would feel about teaching after she had done so for a while. In our March 2010 interview though, she was brimming with enthusiasm for teaching and a genuine desire to help her students. This was clearly evident in her statements like the following:

I don't like to take the job as just earning money. I like to put a real effort. I want to help the kids...I feel with this thing currently, you have an attitude, you won't help these kids. So um – you won't be just like a job – okay, I start from 7:30 to 9:30, and I go at 10 – you know, not like this. I'm doing something good, so I need to be really responsible, and I – you know, I think the attitude of my life, when I'm doing something, I really want to do as best – as good as I could.

When Gigi first told me that Rachel had taken this job, I was quite surprised since Rachel, in all my email communication with her prior to our interview, had stressed how busy she was with her sales job. “I think she likes to be busy,” Gigi had told me. Rachel verified this, saying, “Yes, this is me...I like to be busy – work – very busy. Sometimes I get home, I feel I've got nothing to do, you know. And I feel I'm just wasting my time.” She also told me that another objective in filling her schedule to capacity was to test herself and see just how much pressure she could handle. “I want to know how much pressure I can get. I need to

know,” she said. “I need to test myself also ‘cuz improve the way to deal with pressure – how much level I can have.”

Rachel’s original impetus for taking the teaching job, however, was money, and she admitted that she did indeed feel driven to take on more and more work to make as much money as she possibly could. “I want to earn as much as I can when I am still young,” she told me. “People can really live to be very old, but economic will be a big problem, so I want to earn as much as I can.”

8.10.5 Financial Support for her Mother

Another factor that contributed greatly to Rachel’s drive to amass as much money as possible was the desire to provide financial assistance to her mother and sister. In another two years, her sister would enter the workforce and, therefore, be able to help Rachel support their mother. In the meantime, however, Rachel felt obligated to help them both financially whenever she could. “That’s why it gives me a lot of pressure,” she told me. “That’s why I want to take Gigi’s job working. And right now I try to get more classes as well.”

One event that had held special significance for Rachel was the exchange of *hóng bāo* envelopes during the Chinese New Year celebrations just prior to our March 2010 interview. In Taiwan, the *hóng bāo* tradition involves giving envelopes with money enclosed not only to children, but also to parents and grandparents if one is a working adult. Although she had given *hóng bāo* money to her mother in previous years when she was working part-time jobs and attending Saint Agnes, Rachel’s ability in 2010 to present her mother a *hóng bāo*

envelope with a substantial amount of money enclosed made her feel especially good. “This time, when I give the red envelope, the amount inside – more!” she proudly recalled. “And it really makes me happy, you know. I feel I start to work. I start to have the ability to do this.”

In our May 2009 interview, Rachel told me that her mother had left her abusive husband, but by March of 2010, she had returned to him. According to Rachel, this was a reoccurring pattern. Her mother had actually left her abusive situation many times over the years, but had always returned. Rachel felt, however, that if her mother had a house of her own and could avoid relying on her husband financially, she might be able to finally leave him for good. Her goal was, therefore, to save enough money for a down payment on a house for her mother.

In our May 2009 interview, Rachel had told me that her long-term plan was to live and work in France by the time she was 30. By March of 2010, this plan had been revised slightly. She still hoped to eventually live and work in France, but this dream had been pushed back another five years in order to allow adequate time to set up her mother financially. Eight years or so, Rachel reasoned, should be enough time for her to save enough money for a down payment on a house and for her sister to become financially secure enough to co-sign on the house loan. After buying the house, another seven years of saving money for her mother, she felt, would enable her to leave Taiwan confident that her mother was financially well-off. “I prefer to buy a house first before 30,” she explained. “My sister will share the loan with me, so by the time – like seven years after – I can just go to France without worry, you see.”

8.11 French Update

In May of 2009, Rachel had told me that she thought her French was quickly deteriorating after the international investment company she had worked for closed and her French co-workers returned to France. In March of 2010, she reported further French attrition. “You know, this kind of language stuff,” she remarked. “If you don’t practice – if you don’t use in your life, you forget.” Rachel, however, had recently taken steps to try to halt her French attrition. Just as she had told me she hoped to do in our May 2009 interview, Rachel had enrolled in a French course at the Taipei D’Alliance Française (further contributing to her test of how much pressure she could withstand). This class met every Sunday and, at the time of our March 2010 interview, had met three times. Although she had just begun taking this course and it was still a bit soon for her to substantially regain her French abilities, she thought it was definitely helping. “A little bit come back,” she told me. “These things, you just need to be in the environment. But it’s getting better.”

In the months leading up to our March 2010 interview, Rachel had, however, gotten a bit of practice using French in Taipei with a group of Québécois Canadians. She first met one of these Québécois in a restaurant that he owned and struck up a conversation with him in French. “Because I can speak French – that’s why we start to know each other,” she told me. This Québécois restaurant owner subsequently introduced Rachel to his circle of friends, which included Americans and other Québécois. She was quick to distinguish the Québécois and

their culture from the people and culture of France though. “I haven’t met anyone really from France,” she said. “The French are still different, and the culture things also very different...[Québécois] are more like Canadians.” She reported speaking to them occasionally in French or a combination of French and English. Communication between Rachel and her Québécois friends, however, was generally in English so as not to exclude the Americans that more often than not accompanied them. “We also stick together with American people,” she explained. “So we normally speak English to communicate with everyone.”

8.12 English Update

The Americans that Rachel and the Québécois Canadians stuck together with served as catalysts for a shift in Rachel’s relationship with English. Although she was originally introduced to these two Californians by the Québécois restaurant owner, she quickly became much closer to them than any of her Québécois friends. While she reported, in our March 2010 interview, seeing the Québécois friends only about twice a month (almost always in the company of the Americans), her meetings with the Americans alone were far more frequent. “We meet every – almost every week – have a dinner or go somewhere and always talk,” she told me.

Just ten months earlier, in our May 2009 interview, Rachel had stressed that she didn’t associate the English language with any particular culture, and contrasted this with French, which was inextricably intertwined, in her mind, with French culture. In our March 2010 interview, however, she informed me this had

completely changed due to the close friendship she had forged with the two Californians. English, instead of having general international associations, had quickly come to be associated with American culture for Rachel. And she was quite enthusiastic about learning from her American cultural informants, as is evident in the following excerpt:

They are teaching me a lot about their culture, their living style, what they watch, what they do in America, how they say in this situation. So I really like it...I have total love of America – everything. Yes, I think I'm really American!

Although “I think I’m really American!” was said with a laugh and clearly intended to be a joke, the utterance illustrates the extent to which she had embraced all things American. As Rachel was telling me this, however, in March of 2010, her two close American friends were scheduled to soon leave Taiwan and return to Los Angeles. “I plan to visit them next year...my first trip to America!” she told me gleefully. A few months later, I received an email from Rachel in which she fondly reminisced about her time spent with the, by then, departed American friends:

They were my best friends in Taipei...I really got into their life...We talked whatever about life, love, and sex. They taught me a lot about American culture and this world. They always asked me to come over and watched American old movies or series. They taught me English and the slang. They wouldn't be angry if I didn't understand what they said. They were always happy to explain to me. Therefore when

I talked to them I always felt very free. The time with them was really the best moment in my life.

Although the distinct personalities of Rachel's two American friends no doubt contributed a great deal to the influence they had on her and the associations she had with the English language, she attributed much of the impact to the fact that these were truly her own friends rather than people she met through her ex-boyfriend. Reflecting back on her friendships with foreigners over the course of the last few years, she told me, "I didn't have *my own* foreign friends. Only friends that I met are always by him... This is *my own* friends!" There had actually been other foreigners Rachel considered friends that she had met on her own, such as her former French co-workers at her international investment job. Most of the friends with whom she had spoken English, however, had indeed originally been friends of her ex-boyfriend, and were, therefore, according to Rachel, never as close to her as the two Californians.

With her recent shift to associating English specifically with Americans and American culture, Rachel also noted a change in the way she approached learning the language. Describing her previous attitude as regarding English "as a tool," she explained:

We just say "I take it as a tool." If you want to just use it as a tool – I mean for business trade or something, I think it's no need to know how to speak with them ['native speakers'] – because maybe you don't use English to communicate with Americans, with British... they talk to Japanese, they talk to Europeans – yeah. So if you want to just learn fast

and um – quick and efficiently, you just take it as a tool. Yeah, so you just need to get a good skill. I think that will be enough.

Since she had developed an intense interest in communicating with Americans, however, this approach, Rachel asserted, was no longer appropriate for her. “I will focus on the culture things, for myself,” she said. “For French and for English as well.”

Despite her newfound desire to focus on American culture, Rachel was adamant that neither Americans nor people of any other nationality could claim exclusive ownership of English. “I still think English is a world language,” she stated. “It belongs to the world.” When I asked her if she felt it belonged to her, she replied that it did. “It’s one of *my* languages. I would say that,” she told me. She went on to explain that English and communication with foreigners in English was such an integral part of her world that she could not imagine otherwise:

I think English is part of my life. It’s really part of it...I always need to speak English. I always need to communicate with foreign people. Yeah, I think it’s just part of my life. I cannot imagine that I have not any foreign friends in Taiwan at all.

Unlike Gigi and Audrey, who were both hesitant to claim English ownership, arguing that they still lacked the expertise necessary to make such a claim, Rachel did not place such expertise restrictions on language ownership, arguing instead that a strong affiliation with a language was sufficient. She was, in fact, quick to

claim some degree of ownership in French as well, even though she still regarded herself as very much a learner of the language. “French, it takes a big part of my life, so yeah...I would say also one of mine [my languages],” she explained. “That’s why I’m trying to put a lot of effort right now. I don’t want to stop it, you know – to own it.”

8.13 Conclusion to Rachel’s Story

Over the course of Rachel’s experience learning languages, she has invested much time and effort in particular communities: English and French communities of friends and acquaintances, as well as various workplace communities such as her international investment job with French co-workers and the job at the renewable energy company where English was routinely spoken with European clients. Increased proficiency and confidence in her English and French abilities came about largely as a result of her investment in these communities. Rachel has done a great deal of direct investment in English and French as well though. This direct investment has not been motivated by competition with classmates and a compulsion to achieve high grades. It has instead been fueled by her visions of the future – visions of herself ten years (and subsequently fifteen years) later, working in a managerial position in France, using French and English to achieve professional goals, and visions of her mother as a happy healthy woman in her own house, emotionally and financially free of her abusive spouse. Rachel could thus be said to have been investing in imagined communities as she engaged tirelessly in her ongoing self-development project to improve her linguistic

abilities and “train” herself – imagined communities of future French and English speaking colleagues, and an imagined family community that lacked the presence of the stepfather she so despised.

Just as Gigi channeled much direct investment into English during her first year at Saint Agnes in an attempt to regain her identity as someone that is good at English, Rachel’s repeated efforts to regain her French abilities when they began to fade as a result of disuse similarly represent investment for the sake of repossessing her identity as someone that is good at French. In the vision of herself in the future, living and working in France, she did not envision herself struggling to communicate in French. The vision of her future self was instead of someone who claimed total ownership of the language, using it to communicate with utmost confidence. This is the image she was investing in. As she said, “That’s why I’m trying to put a lot of effort right now. I don’t want to stop it, you know – to own it.”

With her embrace of American culture with a vehement enthusiasm previously reserved for French culture, it is, of course, entirely possible that Rachel could eventually abandon her vision of a life in France and begin investing heavily in an alternate imagined future community – one in Los Angeles perhaps. Such is the nature of investment in imagined communities. It is always dependent on the strength of our affiliations at any given time. And with Rachel’s especially bold personality, she will surely establish countless friendships in the future – each with the potential to sway her affiliations or strengthen existing ones.

Rachel's boldness, along with other entrepreneurial self traits that she possesses in abundance, such as self-reliance, willingness to take risks, and readiness to accept full responsibility for her own lot in life, make her a prime candidate for enterprise culture success. Indeed, with her obsessive desire to continuously "train" herself, her need to test herself to see how much pressure she can withstand, and her insistence that she cannot just sit idly by and wait for opportunities to come to her, Rachel appears to be the ultimate personification of the entrepreneurial self. Taiwanese employers, who seem to no longer value modesty as much as they once did, have recognized this, rewarding Rachel's aggressive self-promotion with offers of one position after the other. Clearly, her mother's goal of producing a daughter who need not rely on others has become a reality, and, as I stated at the beginning of this chapter, foreign languages have played a substantial role in this process. As Rachel trained and tested herself linguistically, her confidence in herself and her abilities increased dramatically – to the point that she could claim ownership of both English and French.

While this study's other three participants came from decidedly middle class families, the financial situation for Rachel's family was much more precarious. Her working class mother could barely afford to send Rachel to Saint Agnes, and her two trips to France would certainly have been impossible without her boyfriend's financial assistance. Hers then seems to be a case in which socio-economic class has not constrained the upwardly mobile path she appears to be on. Her family's financial circumstances, in fact, have served as a powerful driver for her ambitious self-development project that she relentlessly pursues with the dual

objectives of providing a better life for her mother and achieving her goal of living in France.

At one point when we met in March of 2010, Rachel viewed some of my family photos and told me that my family looked like a happy one. “Seeing good families always gives me a really good touch,” she said, and then went on to explain that what she meant by this was that it filled her with optimism for her own future – reassurance that she too could someday live a happy and fulfilling life free of the hardships that had plagued her own family. While the enterprise culture success that Rachel was already well on her way to achieving offered, of course, no guarantee of future happiness, I have no doubt that her quest for happiness will be carried out with the same relentless drive that has characterized her language learning and professional pursuits. And regardless of where her affiliations lead her – to France, America, or perhaps even Spain or Argentina – I am confident that she will aggressively seize all available opportunities, both personal and professional.

Chapter 9

Shannon's Story

Since animosity between those of Mainlander and Taiwanese origin, so often present in the larger Taiwanese society, was not evident among E39A students when I was their teacher, I was totally unaware of which students in the class, if any, came from Mainlander families. Before I began interviewing participants, I asked a few students in informal conversations about who among their classmates might be of Mainlander origin, and one student always singled out was Shannon, who really did claim 100% Mainlander ancestry. “My grandparents – all of my grandparents – came from China...They did not originally live in here,” she told me. Shannon was, in fact, the only one of the 23 students who filled out the written questionnaire that identified ‘Chinese’ as the category that she felt best described her ethnicity. Commenting on this, she said, “I know a lot of people think they’re Taiwanese, but I think I’m Chinese.” Shannon did, of course, feel an attachment to Taiwan – the only home she’d ever known. “I think it’s very complicated,” she said, trying hard to articulate her feelings on this aspect of her identity, and after contemplating the issue for a bit, finally concluded, “I think that I’m a Chinese living in Taiwan.” Eager to have someone with an entirely Mainlander family background that spoke almost no Tai-yu represented in the study, I was very happy that Shannon volunteered to be a focal participant. Her Mainlander family background, however, was just one of several distinctions that made Shannon a very interesting focal participant for this study.

9.1 Life before Saint Agnes

Shannon's mother provided her much exposure to English early in life through English media, such as storybooks and videotapes. Of these media items, it was Disney cartoons in English that made the biggest impression on Shannon.

"Disney cartoons were a very important part in my childhood," she reported.

"Maybe that's why I wanted to learn it...I had a good and positive thinking about English." Since this was before the days of DVD, English could not simply be selected on an on-screen menu. English videotapes had to be obtained from abroad. Shannon's mother managed this by asking her work colleagues to bring some back from their trips overseas. English videotapes were also occasionally received as gifts from family members. "Some of them are from my cousins," Shannon told me. "They live in the United States, and when they come back, they'll bring some gifts to us, like videotapes."

It wasn't until she was nine years old though – in her third year of elementary school – that Shannon began formal English instruction. She was living in Taipei then, and at that time, it was in the third grade that English instruction began for children in the Taipei public schools. The same year that she began studying English in her elementary school, Shannon also started to take supplementary English classes. "I also had another class out of school...like a private school," she remembered. "It's not a formal cram school...The teacher rented a room near our school and a few of the students attended that school – took a class." It was this teacher and her private group lessons – not the elementary school English classes – that really made a positive impression on Shannon.

When she wrote her letter of introduction to me on that first day of class when I was her teacher, Shannon wrote that since she first started learning English, she has been in love with the language. In our interview, she confirmed this and attributed her early love of English almost entirely to the teacher she had for her private group lessons. “During the private school, I learned a lot and I have the passion of learning English,” she told me. “I guess because my teacher – my English teacher, she’s very professional and she speaks English very well, so when I start learning English with her, I just wanted to be like her.” This teacher, who incidentally was Taiwanese and not a foreigner, had previously lived in the United States for a period of time and frequently discussed in class the life that she had lived abroad. The teacher’s in-class reminiscing was perhaps done for her own benefit as much as her students, for she had apparently been quite well-off and lived a luxurious lifestyle during her stay in the United States. “In the class, she always introduced life in the United States,” Shannon recalled. “She owned a house and cars...She was rich at that time, so she was always introducing life – luxury life there, so at that time, I was wanting to be like that in the future.” Since she was still young then, Shannon didn’t really take into consideration the fact that her teacher’s circumstances while living abroad were not at all typical. She envisioned everyone in the United States living the opulent lifestyle her teacher described and associated the English language as well with affluence.

In both Shannon’s private group lessons and in her elementary school English classes, grammar was not emphasized at all. It was instead vocabulary, pronunciation, and some reading that these classes focused on. Shannon

consistently excelled in both classes at the time, but the private group lessons were more advanced than those taught at her elementary school, so doing well there was a more significant accomplishment. “I thought my English ability was quite good because in that class, I belonged to the top student,” she told me. “I had tests for almost a hundred percent – almost all correct – and I can memorize all the vocabulary in our articles.”

It was with this feeling of confident superiority regarding her English skills that Shannon went to Los Angeles for her first trip abroad with her family when she was twelve years old. At that point, she had just finished elementary school and had been studying English for three years. Having never had any opportunity to interact with foreigners before, she was quite excited about the prospect of using English for real communication in Los Angeles. Her first attempt at doing so, however, proved to be a very embarrassing experience that dampened her confidence in using English for the remainder of the trip. As she explained:

Our family went to McDonald’s, and my mom said I should try to order the meal by myself, and I was confident, but I had no opportunity before in Taiwan, so the first time, my mom ordered for me, and when the person delivered our meal, I discovered there is an empty cup and we don’t have to use it and it’s extra. So I told my mom that I would give the cup back to the clerk by myself, and my mom said, “Oh, that’s good. That’s good. You can practice your English.”...So I went straight to the clerk in the McDonald’s, and I looked at him, and I said, “*Zhe ge bei ze shi kong de*” – actually in Chinese, but I didn’t realize.

Yes, but I thought actually I was talking in English, but the clerk looked at me and feel frustrated and confused because I'm not speaking English. He didn't understand at all. And I kept saying because I was too nervous and I thought maybe because my pronunciation is not really clear, and so I lowered my speech and said again and again...I really didn't know because I was too nervous. About maybe three – three or four times later, then my mom said, “What are you doing?” you know, and the clerk is confused about everything. He didn't know what to do, you know. Then my mom told me, “Do you know that you're talking in Chinese?” And I said, “No, actually no.”...After this experience, I was quite afraid of speaking English with people...I was confident, but after this experience, I was totally unconfident. If I was going to buy something or go somewhere, I would just tell my mom in Chinese and she would translate it.

Although she didn't attempt to speak English again on this twenty-day trip, she claimed that the stay in Los Angeles was actually quite beneficial for her progress in English, for it afforded her a great deal of listening practice. “I was always listening in English,” she said.

After returning from this trip and starting junior high school, Shannon could no longer stay in the English class with the teacher she liked so much because that class was only for elementary school students. The teacher taught another class, however, in her home on Saturday mornings. This was a higher level class and the other students there were all at least 16 years old and in high school.

Although Shannon was only 13 years old at the time, her teacher was convinced that she could handle this higher level class. “She thought that I was talented learning English – learning languages – so she recommended my mother to let me go to that class,” Shannon recalled.

Ultimately, taking this higher level class with high school students would prove to be a very valuable experience for Shannon, but her entire first year of the class was truly traumatic. “It was a disaster for me!” she exclaimed. One problem was that she detested these lessons’ focus on grammar. “When I was in the elementary school, I had never learned grammar,” she told me. “So after I entered in that class, I was frustrated because I hated grammar during that time, and every time when I am going to school, I cried a lot at home in the morning.”

In each lesson, students were given an article or story, which served as the basis for that class and a test the following week. “The teacher always asked us to discuss these articles with a partner and she would write down some questions to answer, and also she taught us the grammar,” Shannon recalled. “The first time, I remember the article. It was too difficult for me. And for those students, they only have about 20 vocabulary in that two-page article, but for me, I have like a hundred!...I just didn’t have any idea what the article was about.”

During the first 30 minutes of each class, students took a test on material from the previous week’s article. For the first of these tests that Shannon took, based on the article she described above, she received a score of 48%. This was absolutely devastating for her. “I thought it’s awful!” she told me. “That is the lowest grade I have ever had!” Rather than cause her to concede defeat and drop

out of the class or lower expectations for herself in light of the fact that she was in a class with older more advanced pupils, this low test score prompted Shannon to become even more determined to excel in the class. “That made me feel that although I’m younger than them, I still have to get rid of this,” she explained. “I just want to be at the top.”

And Shannon did, in fact, reach the top of this class – quickly. She improved only slightly the following week, receiving a 56% on that test, but the week after that, her score was 100%. She attributed this drastic improvement to determination, intense study, and a lot of memorization. “On Friday, I even didn’t do my homework,” she recalled. “Just spent all night to memorize everything because you would never know what vocabulary will appear, but it’s all included in the article that was given in the previous week...so I memorized every word in the article.” She did this week after week in her desperate attempt to get to the top of the class – and stay there. “It’s also very hard to keep the record,” she told me, “because once you get a hundred, then the next time, you cannot, you know, get only 60 or 80. You still have to get 99 or 100.” Despite her high scores on these tests, Shannon’s weekly ritual of article memorization continued, for about a year, to be an intensely grueling experience that, every week, totally drained her emotionally. “When I was preparing for the test, I always cried, but I still got a hundred,” she said. It must be noted that throughout this extremely stressful experience, Shannon’s parents, while supportive, never exerted any pressure on her to excel academically in English or any other subject. “I only give the pressure to myself,” she remarked, stressing the personal nature

of her self-improvement project, even at this early age, and taking full responsibility for her ascent to the top of her class. The trauma of preparing for the weekly tests did ease after a year. “The second year, the situation improved a lot,” she told me. By this time, her vocabulary and grammar knowledge had progressed to the point that the unfamiliar material in the articles had become considerably less, so preparation became much less of an ordeal. This was fortunate, for Shannon soon had another source of stress to contend with – high school entrance exams, which would involve a great deal of math and science.

The fierce competitiveness that Shannon displayed in her quest to be at the top in her English classes (and, to a lesser extent, Chinese classes as well) was completely absent when it came to math and science, for she struggled just to receive halfway respectable grades in these classes. During her preparation for high school entrance exams, Shannon got quite depressed at the prospect of having these subjects she so despised continuing to haunt her throughout the next three years of high school. “That’s not good for my health condition,” she told me. “So after that, my mom thought that it would be better to come here [to Saint Agnes] to learn something that I am interested in.” So just as it had done for other focal participants, choosing Saint Agnes in lieu of a normal high school allowed Shannon to avoid further math and science classes (except for one math class the first year). Saint Agnes also, of course, offered Shannon and the other participants the opportunity to intensely focus on language, which generally takes a back seat to math and science in normal Taiwanese high schools. “My mom thought I was talented in learning languages,” Shannon informed me. “So she

wanted me to come here to learn English and French. These comments make it sound like the choice of attending Saint Agnes was made by Shannon's mother, and that does indeed seem to have been the case. Shannon, however, was herself quite enthusiastic about going to Saint Agnes, even though it required that she move to Southern Taiwan. "Staying in Taipei, I could enter some normal high school," she said. "But that is not what I want because I hate math and science."

9.2 Life in the Saint Agnes Five-Year Program

When I asked Shannon how she found the English learning experience once she started at Saint Agnes, she replied, "Oh, it's quite good because I was still at the top in the class." And she was indeed one of the top E39A students when I was their teacher. She didn't speak much in class except when called upon specifically, but she often came to me with questions after class and consistently scored high grades on tests and written assignments – grades that were on a par even with those of the students who had spent years abroad in English speaking countries. Like Gigi and Rachel, Shannon did report being intimidated by these students' English proficiency. Whereas this intimidation for Gigi and Rachel basically ceased to be a problem after the first year though, Shannon's competitive nature never allowed her to stop comparing her own abilities to those of these classmates. "Comparing! Oh yes, still," she told me. "Through the five years...because they are very good – no matter writing or speaking."

Shannon told me that she didn't have any problem her first year adjusting to English being used as the sole medium of instruction at Saint Agnes and

estimated that she generally understood a least half of what instructors said. “I still could understand the main idea – what they’re doing, and what teacher asks us to do,” she said. For the placement test that first year that determined what listening class she would be in the following year, Shannon’s score placed her in Class 2 – the second highest one. Her grades in that listening class the second year then allowed her to move up to the highest level Class 1 group for her third year at Saint Agnes.

In contrast to her fond memories of academic success in English classes at Saint Agnes, Shannon described her French study there as “a terrible experience.” With English, she had been eased into the language, with three years of lessons before grammar was emphasized. With French at Saint Agnes, however, grammar was introduced from the very first class. “When I started to learn English, I start from pronunciation and listening and reading – not the grammar,” she explained. “So I came to here, and I start learning French. The first thing I learn is grammar, so I cannot accept that.” And the French grammar, with its verb conjugations and declensions, was a real struggle for Shannon. “I feel better about the pronunciation part because it is easy – for French pronunciation,” she told me. “But for French grammar, it is too complicated for me.”

Although she insisted that she had exerted an extraordinary amount of effort in studying French, just as she had in the English class with high school students when she was thirteen, all her efforts seemed to be for naught. “I work very hard like I worked on English before, but I cannot see any improvement,” she lamented. “I think I could do it, but when the tests come, I still fail. I cannot.” Shannon’s

use of the word *fail* here is a bit of an exaggeration. She estimated that it was only about 7% of the French tests and quizzes that she actually received failing grades on, and she never had to re-take any of her French courses. The high standards she set for herself, however, caused her to view anything less than a 90% as failure – personal failure and failure relative to the grades of other students that she was accustomed to competing with. “For me, I think it’s fail,” she stated. “Because, you know, in Taiwan, the students’ competition is very tight, so every time when I have good grades on, like, Chinese subjects or English subjects, I always got the same level as Fiara or Becky, who are very good students in our class. But I only fail on the French subjects because sometimes they got 90%, but I only got 70...and I cannot compete with them in class.”

Although it was in no way part of her studies at Saint Agnes, Shannon also cited her lack of Tai-yu knowledge as being a source of minor difficulties – especially her first year in Southern Taiwan. She reported that for daily living, Mandarin Chinese was sufficient for almost any situation, and that even communication with street vendors, who sometimes only speak Tai-yu, was not a problem because she was almost always with friends who could help her. Situations periodically did arise though where she was made uncomfortable by her lack of Tai-yu knowledge. She told me one story, for example, where a neighbor asked her roommate if Shannon was deaf when she didn’t understand what he was saying to her in Tai-yu. Even when she was among friends, she was sometimes made uncomfortable by their use of Tai-yu around her. “In some situations, it’s still uncomfortable because some of my friends, maybe they are

comfortable speaking Tai-yu. They like to speak Tai-yu – maybe with their friends or maybe with their families,” she said. “So when I’m in class in the first year, I was uncomfortable about this.” It was not at all uncommon, she reported, for her friends to even tease her a bit about her lack of Tai-yu knowledge. “Sometimes in school, my friends are talking in Tai-yu, but I cannot understand,” she told me. “And they will say, ‘Do you understand what we’re saying?’ I go, ‘No,’ [and they say] ‘Yeah, I know – because you don’t speak Tai-yu!’” Shannon acknowledged that her friends were not trying to be intentionally hurtful with such teasing. “But still, you will feel uncomfortable in that situation,” she said.

9.3 Additional Opportunities to Use English

Besides her English use in class with classmates and teachers, Shannon reported having various opportunities to use English in her daily life. Some of these were face-to-face interactions and others computer mediated communication. Her interlocutors in these interactions came from a variety of backgrounds – some were Taiwanese and some European, while others were family members living in the United States.

9.3.1 Tutoring Jobs

Shannon’s most regular use of English outside of her classes was probably in a teaching capacity as an English tutor at two different jobs. One was at a language center on the Saint Agnes campus, and another was at a school off-campus where she tutored elementary school students in both English and Chinese. At the time

of our first interview in May of 2009, Shannon had held the on-campus tutoring job for two years and the off-campus one for a year. At the language center on the Saint Agnes campus, her job designation was specifically helping students with their oral skills, such as pronunciation and conversation. This tutoring job, therefore, required much more actual verbal English interaction with students than one where grammar or writing is the focus. Describing these tutoring sessions, she told me, “People just make appointments, then they’ll come to you and we’ll have a discussion on the topic they appointed – maybe like entertainment or the life in school...discuss something in English – practice the oral skill.”

9.3.2 Computer-Mediated English Use as of May 2009

In our May 2009 interview, Shannon also reported that for a year she had been having regular internet conversations – about twice a week – with a friend from Spain that she had met online. This too was oral communication, and arguably face-to-face communication as well, since they used Skype, microphones, and webcams instead of just typing instant messages. She told me that being able to communicate with this internet buddy had served to really make her feel good about her English abilities. “He speaks English, so that makes me feel really wonderful,” she said. Although she didn’t communicate with them as frequently as she did with the Spanish friend, Shannon also reported having internet buddies in France and Italy. The French friend, she told me, was completely unaware that she had ever studied French, and she wanted to keep it that way.

Like the other focal participants, Shannon also used a considerable amount of English on Facebook. “We seldom use Chinese on that,” she remarked. “I think it’s more interesting because maybe I guess that makes us special from other students.” When I asked her if she could comment further on how English use on Facebook made her and her classmates feel special, Shannon replied, “I still have some other friends on Facebook from other high schools or other universities, but they don’t use English, so when I have English words on it, they say, ‘Okay, this is a Saint Agnes student,’ you know.” A quick look at Shannon’s Facebook page showed that she actually did use a fair amount of Chinese, especially when commenting on friends’ Chinese status postings. Very common as well though were short English phrases and comments, such as “take care la,” “i miss u,too!!!!REALLY!!!,” and even a comment that incorporated a bit of French – “Pas de problem!!!! Can’t wait to see u!!!”

Shannon also reported using English during her summer and winter vacations to communicate over the internet with her cousins in Los Angeles. These cousins were born in the United States after their parents moved there, so most of them were English/Chinese bilinguals. One of them, who was about the same age as Shannon, spoke almost no Chinese, and the others were English dominant, so it was easier for all of them to converse with Shannon in English than in Chinese. The summer between her second and third year at Saint Agnes, Shannon visited these cousins in Los Angeles and reported speaking English exclusively with them then. “That time, during that period, I speak English all the time even though we were all Chinese,” she told me.

9.3.3 English Use with her Brother

On her written questionnaire, Shannon also listed her brother as someone that she regularly communicated with in English. When I asked her about this, she explained that speaking English to her was not something her brother did on his own volition, but was instead something their mother forced him to do.

Describing her use of English with her brother, Shannon told me:

He's now in high school and he's going to have university entrance exams and he's not good at English. In the summer or winter vacation, I'll stay at home all the time, and my mom will say, like, "On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, at home you can only speak English – no Chinese at all"...It's a rule, but at first, my brother will always shut up and listen, and when I ask him something, he'll just "Um-hmm, okay, um-hmm, yeah" – something like this – no other kind of words or sentences. And so my mom thought of another – "Before you go to bed, you should make ten sentences with the vocabulary you learned today, and you have to make a sentence and have a short conversation with your sister. If you finish it, you can go to bed, but if you don't, then you cannot."

Shannon told me that this rule had been in place for two years, and went into effect every time she came home during school vacations. "I think he's a typical learner – English learner in Taiwan – because he only learns grammar," she told me. "He is very good at grammar...and so he has the English ability, but he don't

want to speak.” Shannon explained how, each time she went home for a vacation, she initially refrained from correcting her brother’s English in any way, but gradually began to do so later, phrasing her corrections as suggestions:

No matter what he says, I can understand because we’re both Chinese and we are in the same family. So in some situations, maybe the grammar or the vocabulary is not correct, but I still can understand. So at first, I won’t correct him...but after a month, I will say, “Okay, maybe in this situation, you can use this word better,” or some conversation skill you have to be aware of – something like that.

Speaking English to her brother like this during her vacations did seem to have been highly successful, for Shannon reported that her brother’s spoken English had improved dramatically. “He got the confidence, and before he thought he cannot,” she said. When I asked her if his improvement could have come from any source besides her speaking English to him, she replied, “Maybe not – because he doesn’t have any classes outside of school...and at school, the teacher only teaches grammar.”

9.3.4 Pretending to be a Foreigner

In addition to the English use already discussed, Shannon also, on occasion, created opportunities to project her identity as an English speaker. She told me, for example, that she and her friends would sometimes go to Taiwanese public places like night markets and pretend to be English-speaking foreigners with no knowledge of Chinese. “In some situations, I’m with my friends. Like we’re

going to night market or something, and we want to, you know, sometimes show off or something,” she said. “And we will speak English...pretend that we are foreigners – this kind of joke. Yes, so interesting.” She told me another story about a similar sort of incident at a Taiwan High Speed Rail station when she was actually alone and not with friends. On this occasion, Shannon’s actions were prompted not only by a desire to show off and project her identity as an English speaker, but also her anger over being rejected for a job with the High Speed Rail company and her feeling that despite this rejection, their staff’s command of spoken English was insufficient for a company that caters to a large number of foreigners. As Shannon told me:

In the fourth year in here, I wanted to have a part-time job, and I want to be the broadcaster in the High Speed Rail...I applied – an application to their company – and they refused me because they said they want somebody to be full-time – not only for part-time. And I feel unhappy about it because I think the people speaking English there is not really, you know, correct...Now it’s better, but on the first time when I heard it, it was terrible...So after they refused me, when I take the High Speed Rail, I always repeat this memory – you know, they refused me, but their broadcast is not good – not really good. So one day, I was going to take the High Speed Rail, and I saw a service man standing there to help people to pass or to have the tickets or something. Then I just have an idea that if I am speaking English and I pretend that I do not know Chinese at all, what will he do? Because in High Speed Rail, there’s a lot of foreigners,

so you have to have the English ability. So I took my luggage – because my luggage was very big – and I entered in the gates, and I asked him, “Um, excuse me. Do you know where is the elevator?” And he said, “Uhhhhhhh,” right? And he didn’t understand at all. And I repeat again, “Elevator – do you know elevator?” and he said “um” and he said, “That way” in Chinese. I understand, but I said, “I’m sorry. I can only speak English. I don’t know Chinese,” and he’s also like the clerk in the McDonald’s. He’s confused and don’t know what to do. And I repeat again, “I want to know where is the elevator. Tell me. Where is the elevator.” And he said, “Okay, um – can you wait for a second? I’ll get somebody to help” in Chinese.

Eventually, the hapless railroad employee did return with someone who had a better grasp of English. Shannon kept up her ruse, asking where the elevator was. The woman told her, and Shannon went on her way, feeling vindicated and pleased that she had been able to highlight in some small way the inadequacy of the High Speed Rail staff’s spoken English proficiency.

9.4 Future Plans as of May 2009

In her letter of introduction from the first day of her second year at Saint Agnes, Shannon wrote, “To graduate from the university in the U.S.A. is my dream. I really want to study in UCLA, but I know it’s very difficult.” When I met her for our May 2009 interview almost four years later, she informed me that attending UCLA was no longer a goal for her. “I would have this goal because of my friend

because we were classmates and best friends in junior high school, and now she's studying in UCLA," Shannon told me. "That's kind of a promise made by us when we were in the junior high school." Although she no longer had her sights set on UCLA, she did still see American university study in her future – albeit not any time soon.

Shannon's more immediate goals involved her continued stay in Taiwan to work on a degree in translation and interpretation. "Doing an interpreting job was one of my dreams when I came to this school," she told me. "I remember the first year, the school gave us a form that we need to fill in. It asked about um – what's your ideal job in the future? And I said I wanted to be an interpreter." Although she still intended to work to achieve this goal, she was under no illusions that doing so would be at all easy. She had, in fact, become somewhat discouraged by the difficulty of introductory interpretation classes she had already taken. "In these past two years, I have taken some interpreting classes," she informed me. "And that made me feel like – have some doubt with it – because it's too difficult...it has a lot of challenge."

Like many of her classmates, Shannon, at the time of our May 2009 interview, had just received her two-year college entrance exam results. She was certain that the score she received was adequate to grant her admission to the Saint Agnes Translation and Interpretation department, and this, she told me, would be her back-up plan. Her first choice, however, was to attend a highly prestigious national university in Taipei, and she had already submitted her application to this

school. “I’m not sure whether I really can go there or not,” she informed me.

“It’s kind of one of the highest in Taipei, so it’s very difficult.”

Even after another two years of concentrated study though, Shannon was quite sure that she would still not be adequately prepared to enter the interpreting profession. “That’s still not enough for interpreting,” she said. “So I’ll still have to get another degree.” This is where Shannon’s long-time dream of studying in the United States found its place in her future plans. After graduating from either Saint Agnes or the national university in Taipei with a degree in Translation and Interpretation, she planned to work for a year or two (“being a teacher or tutoring in a cram school or something like that”) in order to save money. She then hoped to go to the United States to study – but not at UCLA as she had once dreamed. “I would prefer to go, like, Washington more – Chicago or something like that,” she told me. “Because I know Chicago – most of the people in Chicago speak pretty standard English.” Being immersed in Standard American English, Shannon stressed, was a very important consideration for her, and she told me that upon completing her studies in Chicago, Washington, or some other U.S. destination where most of the English spoken is more or less standard, she intended to stay in the United States to live and work for an extended period of time. Life in America, it seems, had been on Shannon’s mind for as long as she could remember. “Before I went there, I still had a positive dream about it,” she said. From early frequent exposure to Disney cartoons to years of hearing her English teacher rhapsodize about the affluent life she had lived in the United States, Shannon’s positive impressions of American life had been continuously

nurtured. Her two trips to Los Angeles – first between elementary school and junior high school and then again between her second and third year at Saint Agnes – only served to reinforce these positive impressions. She told me that she imagined herself using English with almost everybody in her future life in the United States. Of course, if she were to be working as an English to Chinese/Chinese to English interpreter though, she would always have a great deal of Mandarin Chinese in her life as well.

9.5 Relationships with Various Languages as of May 2009

Although she did participate in an English as an international lingua franca Discourse community with her regular online English communication with European internet buddies, Shannon definitely associated English most strongly with the United States. This was hardly surprising, given her long-standing dream of studying – and eventually living and working – in America. It was, therefore, Standard American English spoken with a standard American accent that she strove for. In her efforts to achieve this accent, she reported watching American TV shows – especially the show *Friends*. Describing her use of this show for listening practice and exposure to standard American English pronunciation, she told me:

I watched it twice – the whole ten seasons. I watched it with my friends the first time, and I watched it with Chinese subtitles. Another time, I watched it totally in English subtitle or no subtitle, and the reason why I watch it again – because it's almost all about practicing...

I want to have speech more like real Americans...American English.

So I think because they are all Americans in the TV shows, they can speak the real American speech and pronunciation and intonation...

So I watch it to learn how to pronounce the words correctly, or the intonation or something.

No matter how entrenched Shannon's identity as an English speaker becomes though, Mandarin Chinese is likely to always play a very large identity role for her. On the written questionnaire, she stated that Chinese was "super important" to her, and she wrote that Mandarin would be the language she would wish her children to speak in the hypothetical situation where they were only allowed to speak one language. She also stressed in our interview that she would ensure her future children learn Mandarin Chinese. "I think it's identity," she said, "because my children will be Chinese...so they should learn Mandarin. It's a priority – first Mandarin, then English."

Shannon reported that, after living in Southern Taiwan for more than five years, she had managed to gain a bit of receptive competence in Tai-yu. "In recent years, a little – just a little," she told me. "I cannot speak, but I can kind of understand – listening...just a little bit." Despite her very limited Tai-yu proficiency and her family's Mainlander origin, Shannon didn't concern herself with Taiwanese politics. She told me that she considered the way people got so heated up over political issues quite strange, and that she felt Taiwan's political situation was really too complicated to be reduced to the two ideologies of the pan-blue and pan-green coalitions. She noted, however, that her family members supported the

pro-unification pan-blue parties. “All my family are with the pan-blue,” she reported.

As could be expected, given all the disparaging comments she made about her study of French, Shannon didn’t see French as having any place in her future at all when we met in May of 2009. On the written questionnaire item that asked her to comment on the role of French in her life at that time, she wrote, “annoying and unnecessary” and told me in our interview, “I don’t want to learn it at all.” She didn’t completely rule out the possibility of taking it up again in the future though, given the right circumstances. “Maybe in the future, maybe I will meet a friend who is from France or Europe,” she said. “Maybe I’ll still have a passion for learning it because I’ll have a reason, but not in school.”

Shannon actually told me that she had recently been contemplating the reasons for her extreme passion for English in contrast to her total lack of passion for French, concluding that it was probably due to the manner in which French had been taught at Saint Agnes, with a focus on grammar, which was similar to the way English was taught in normal Taiwanese high schools – a practice that generally does not evoke much passion for English among Taiwanese students. “I started to think it’s the way of teaching English,” she told me, “because in school, like in junior high school or in normal high school, they teach English, like, the teacher always teach grammar – like having multiple choices, and like this kind of thing, so the students in here learn a lot of grammar stuff, but they cannot even speak.” Despite her feeling that a focus on grammar had been detrimental to her embrace of French, Shannon went on to speculate about whether, if she were to be

an English teacher in the not so distant future, she might want to provide more grammar-focused instruction than she herself had started out with as a child. “If I am being a teacher in here, teaching English, what should I do?” she wondered aloud. “Because I don’t like to teach students start from grammar, but, you know, my grammar is not good...It’s, well, you know – it’s average. I still make some mistakes – some errors – some small things. But for normal high school students, they get a very high score on that. And I started thinking whether that’s good or bad.”

I suspected that what motivated these thoughts for Shannon was the extreme competitiveness she felt for anything related to English. Even though her spoken English proficiency was far beyond that of most Taiwanese students, it still bothered her that many could surpass her in the examination room – passing entrance exams to gain entrance to prestigious national universities, for instance. What she was failing to recognize in these comments, of course, is that the grammar expertise of typical Taiwanese high school students only serves them well on written exams, and while they may be able to excel at such exams that so often serve gatekeeping functions in Taiwan, their textbook knowledge of the intricacies of English grammar seldom allows them any real communicative proficiency.

While high scores on entrance examinations will get students into prestigious universities, and possessing a degree from one of these universities can indeed help one in the job market, Taiwanese employers are increasingly insistent that the employees they hire have communicative proficiency in English. Shannon

herself maintained in our May 2009 interview that in Taiwanese society today, English is “important and necessary.” “Like the job opportunity in Taiwan,” she explained. “They want the hired people to have English ability, so it’s required, I think.” Like the other focal participants, Shannon firmly believed that English abilities were indispensable in Taiwanese society, and anyone that neglected to make English mastery a priority would surely be disadvantaged.

If Shannon is to someday be seeking employment in the United States, entrepreneurial self qualities would, without a doubt, be assets. On the portion of the written questionnaire that asked her to evaluate these qualities in herself, Shannon gave herself a middle score of 3 for ‘self-reliance’ and a higher score of 4 for ‘willingness to take risks.’ For ‘boldness,’ however, she gave herself a 0. In my opinion, this score is a huge underestimation of her own bravery, for someone with zero boldness would never have had the chutzpah to engage in activities like the ‘pretending to be a foreigner’ game. If Shannon’s competitiveness is triggered, I felt she would, in fact, be capable of summoning copious amounts of boldness in her quest “to be at the top.” Boldness, self-reliance, and willingness to take risks alone, however, do not constitute the ideal enterprise culture subject. Also necessary is an insistence on shouldering all the responsibility for one’s circumstances and a total embrace of continuous self-development for the purposes of achieving maximum marketability. Shannon did take personal responsibility for her lack of English grammar mastery, but unlike a participant in the study by Abelmann *et al.* (2009), who refused to critique the Korean entrance exam system despite repeatedly failing to achieve high scores and admitting hers

was not a personality suited for exams, Shannon voiced utter disdain for entrance exams in Taiwan, which she saw as an obstacle to achieving her goals. Shannon's personal development project was also not oriented toward achieving mastery in a wide variety of areas for maximum flexibility, as Rachel's was. Instead, Shannon's competitive nature caused her to focus only on one area in which she had consistently surpassed others (spoken English), while becoming discouraged and abandoning areas in which she saw no chance of being "at the top" (French).

9.6 Life after Graduation

After her graduation from the Saint Agnes five-year junior college program, Shannon's life did not change drastically. She was not accepted into the Translation and Interpretation department at the university in Taipei that she had applied at, and therefore went with her back-up plan of remaining at Saint Agnes and entering the two-year Translation and Interpretation program there. Despite the fact that she remained at Saint Agnes, however, Shannon, over the course of the ten months between our May 2009 and March 2010 interviews, did undergo an attitudinal transformation.

9.6.1 The Saint Agnes Translation & Interpretation Program

About a month into her first semester in the Saint Agnes two-year Translation & Interpretation program, Shannon sent me an email in which she lamented, "My life has been soooo miserable...I had a looooot of translation homework to do. And the teachers in our department are so strict and always give us a bunch of

difficult works and technical article to interpret.” She ended the email on an optimistic note though, telling me, “I think it’s getting better and better now.” The reason it gradually got “better and better,” she told me later when we met for our March 2010 interview, was that she simply got better at time management. “I get used to the pattern because I adjust my life – my time schedule,” she reported. “I have to arrange this period of time I’m doing homework and another period of time I’m reading because our translating and interpreting requires a lot of outside reading.”

Outside reading (mostly American news magazines such as *TIME* and *Newsweek*) was especially important for a course she was taking entitled *Sight Translation*. In this course, students were presented with a Chinese article and given just five minutes to read it before being asked to provide an English interpretation of one paragraph from the article in front of the class. Shannon described this course as quite challenging and went on to tell me, “Those articles are like politics, economy. Most of them are economic issues like recession... That requires me to read other articles or to memorize some other specific vocabulary that will save my time on checking the dictionary all the time.” Shannon also described as challenging her *Simultaneous Interpreting* course, which involved listening to a conversation or speech, taking notes, and then interpreting based on those notes. She reported having positive learning experiences in both the *Simultaneous Interpreting* class and *Sight Translation* classes, mostly because, in these courses, she received instant feedback on her work.

In her *Translation* course, however, Shannon received almost no feedback on the work she did for the class. As she explained:

Every week, we'll have four articles to translate – two in Chinese into English and another two in English to Chinese. Yes, and in the previous week, we have to have done those articles, and next week, we'll have a kind of presentation. The teacher will just call one of the students to come up the stage and present the translation work...And then he will also call on someone to give a comment – make a comment. And then he will just, like, correct the translation work...But I think it's not really good because every single class, only one student will be called, and everybody's translation is different...So last semester, I only have one chance to be called. Then actually the teacher would just read my translation word for word. And others – for the rest of the work – I have to write it all myself and think about whether it is wrong or right.

For this class of forty students, providing extensive feedback on every one of the four translations each student did weekly would, of course, have been an almost impossible undertaking. At the same time, however, receiving minimal comments and corrections only once per semester (or maybe twice if one was extremely lucky) was clearly unacceptable, and Shannon's complaints, I felt, were valid. While students could certainly learn from paying attention to critiques of their classmates' work, each student's translation would likely have very different problems. "Mainly we don't use the same words," Shannon said. "I don't know whether it is appropriate to use these words in this situation." Alternate words

from those used in a translation being critiqued could very well be valid choices, but they could just as easily be inappropriate. Explaining how important she considered specific feedback for learning translation, she told me, “Then we will know whether it is good or not, so we can make the improvements. But no, we don’t have that chance.” Her teacher would undoubtedly argue that doing four article translations per week is valuable practice whether feedback is received or not. Shannon saw it instead as pointless busywork. “You just write for fun,” she said with exasperation⁴⁸.

Shannon went into her first semester in the Translation & Interpretation program with her highly competitive spirit fully intact and found herself amongst similarly competitive students there. She told me that teachers had, in fact, commented on her cohort, saying that they were the most competitive bunch they had ever encountered. To illustrate how competitive some of her classmates were, Shannon told me a story about one student’s behavior in the *Sight Translation* class:

One of the students, I would consider she is the number one student in our class because she has very good English ability and other European language ability. And one day she got up on the stage to present and she just made one – only one single mistake. And after that she cried because she thought that she was humiliated.

⁴⁸ When I interviewed the faculty member in charge of curriculum development for the Translation & interpretation department, I told him about the lack of feedback Shannon had reported for this class, and he assured me that such pedagogical practices were not at all sanctioned by the department. He asked me to urge Shannon to come to him with her grievances so the teacher could be identified and reprimanded. I did pass this message along to Shannon, but I don’t know if she has done so.

As competitive as Shannon herself was, even she considered crying over a single mistake to be quite extreme. She reported, however, that for this classmate and several others who had recently returned from time spent abroad, the rivalry was truly cutthroat. Shannon considered the linguistic abilities of these students to be vastly superior to her own, but this did not trigger in her the same sort of determination she had displayed when she was a junior high school student in the class with older high school students. In her *Sight Translation* and *Simultaneous Interpretation* classes, she couldn't see any way that her work could ever come close, much less surpass that of these classmates, and she thus reported being far less competitive with her translation and interpretation work than she had been in academic English pursuits when I had talked to her just ten months earlier. For the *Translation* course in which she had had only one opportunity to showcase her work, Shannon saw even less point in exerting the effort to compete with others. "In the translation works, if I did very well, maybe I won't have the chance to present it and it's meaningless," she told me. "So I don't put a lot of effort."

Shannon also didn't feel the need to try very hard in some other required courses that she could probably have achieved perfect grades in, had she exerted just a little more effort. Commenting on a listening class that she considered ridiculously easy, for example, she said, "I think it's just wasting time because I cannot learn anything." She went on to express frustration over the fact that this listening class' teacher did not allow her to do work for other classes in the listening class and compared this attitude with that of the teacher she had had the previous semester:

Last semester we had another teacher. She didn't have a very good preparation for the class, but I think it's okay because she let us do something. If we don't want to just pay attention on the class, then we can do something else – just be silent and doing some work. I think that's better because I can still take the exams. I can still get like 80 or 90 percent on the exam. And I can also know what you're saying and I can grab the idea of what you are talking about. And I can answer your questions if you ask me. But I still can do something that I need to do – because if it is too easy for me, then I can do something else.

She acknowledged that most teachers would not consider it unreasonable to expect students to pay attention to the content of a lesson, but argued that she was simply trying to manage her time as best she could. “The material is easy,” she stressed again. “I just want to save the time for doing the work that I have to do...I don't know. It's just from the student's point of view.”

9.6.2 Employment

During the summer of 2009, between her graduation from the Saint Agnes five-year junior college program and her entrance into the two-year Translation & Interpretation program, Shannon worked as a volunteer receptionist at a hotel, catering to the needs of English speaking VIP guests that were in town for the World Games. The foreign clientele at this particular hotel normally tended to be Japanese, so the hotel's regular staff were far more fluent in Japanese than

English. “Most of them are good in Japanese and Chinese – not very good in English,” she explained. For a month, Shannon worked full-time hours at the hotel. Describing her basic duties there, she told me:

Before the World Games, we did like the normal workers – like check-in, check-out...And during the World Games, we just picked up phone calls from, like, customers asking for some, like, drinks or other orders in English, and we transferred it to Chinese. Yes, and also handling some problems they have.

She was, however, expected to go to great lengths to serve the hotel’s VIP guests, such as members of the World Games organizing committee. “When they arrive, we have to go downstairs to welcome them for the elevator and then send them to their rooms,” she informed me. “It requires conversation – not just bore them,” she added with a laugh. She described this temporary volunteer work as “kind of a good experience” and explained, “Working in a hotel is kind of boring because they went out very early and they came back late. So during that period of time, we have nothing to do.”

Prior to taking this temporary volunteer position at the hotel, Shannon did have an interview with the hotel’s manager. She reported, however, that this interview was extremely casual and, given the volunteer nature of the job, she saw no need to really promote herself or her abilities. “It’s not a big deal. We’re just volunteer,” she said. “We just talked and just – like friends – chat, and sharing what we did before.” Shannon did tell me though that she was certain she would be comfortable promoting herself and her abilities in future interview situations,

and attributed the rating of 0 she had given herself for boldness on the written questionnaire ten months earlier to the fact that she had filled out that questionnaire just days after taking university entrance exams – an experience that temporarily decimated her self-confidence. “Every time when I’m facing the exam, I feel terrible,” she explained.

After returning to Saint Agnes in September of 2009, Shannon resumed the same tutoring job at the on-campus language learning center that she had held at the time of our May 2009 interview, having discussions with tutees on topics of their choosing for the purpose of practicing their spoken English. Although she was no longer tutoring children in English and Chinese at the school off-campus at the time of our March 2010 interview, she had acquired an additional on-campus tutoring job and had started to conduct private tutoring sessions for high school students. The additional on-campus job involved the same sort of conversation practice that she provided students at the language learning center, but for this job, her tutees were Saint Agnes teachers instead of students. “Some teachers – not in the English department. In National Affairs – some teachers there,” she told me. “Maybe they have really good skills on English reading or something, but they don’t have really good skill in speaking.” It was a result of holding these conversation sessions with teachers that Shannon started conducting her private tutorials. “One of the teachers asked me to tutor her daughter,” she explained. In total, Shannon did conversation tutoring for six hours every week – two hours at the language learning center, two hours tutoring National Affairs teachers, and two hours of private tutoring.

9.6.3 World Model United Nations

When we conducted our March 2010 interview, Shannon had just returned from the World Model United Nations conference in Taipei that had been held the week before. Each school that participated in this conference was allowed a delegation of twenty people. Saint Agnes' delegation was the English Debate Society, but since there were only fifteen students in this club, Shannon and a few of her friends had been invited to come along as delegates. Delegates were assigned specific countries to represent, and for the conference, they were expected to research the international affairs of their assigned countries and the positions their country took on international issues in the year 1940. Shannon's assigned country was Nepal. She reported finding the experience extremely valuable, but also quite tiring. As she explained:

I was every day so tired because, well, of course I can speak English, but we have to speak English on many different issues or specific topics. That's more difficult for me... People were representing different countries, and people went on the stage and said, "Well, we support the ceasefire immediately" – something like this. But well, um – for me, I think it's just repeat and repeat again and again. I don't want to just stand there and say the things that is just like others, but I cannot think of others that I can say. Yes, so I didn't have a lot of opportunity to speak last week.

When Shannon said she didn't have a lot of opportunity to speak, she was referring to making statements in her Model U.N. role as the Nepal delegate.

“We have a lot of chance to speak with other delegates after the conference,” she went on to clarify. Indeed, it was interaction with other conference delegates during social activities at the end of each day that seemed to be the highlight of the conference, not only for Shannon, but also for other Saint Agnes delegates that I spoke to. Over the course of the entire week, Shannon reported, all communication was conducted in English, regardless of whether interlocutors were foreigners or her Saint Agnes classmates. “We always talked in English no matter if it was in the conference or after the conference,” she said. “Whether on Metrotrain or on the bus, we still talked in English no matter we were staying with Chinese or foreigners.” She went on to tell me that everyone was basically in English mode for the entire week and it didn’t seem at all strange for her to use English with her fellow Taiwanese during this trip. “Maybe it’s because I consider that week as very special,” she mused.

Although Shannon had had some experience using English as an international lingua franca – with her Spanish internet friend, for instance – and she had certainly been well aware, on an intellectual level anyway, of the potential of English as a means to communicate with the world, it took 1,800 World Model U.N. delegates converging on a convention center in Taipei and her actual experience there, interacting in English with large numbers of students from all over the globe, that truly made the reality of English as an international lingua franca hit home for her. As she explained:

Knowing how to speak English is a very very good thing. Last week, I was kind of surprised that actually we can communicate – all the people

around the world – in English. And if we don't learn English – we only speak Chinese or the official language of a country – then we cannot communicate and even have that conference, and we cannot share the ideas, have the discussion, and people are just isolated...Before, I talked to the Spanish guy, but this time, I think, is very special because people from all around the world – like Venezuela and some – India, and the people that I have never met...a lot of German people and Spanish people and some people with accents that I cannot really understand...And it's amazing!

Shannon summed up the impact her participation in this conference had on her and her view of English by calling it “the real experience of how important the language is.”

The World Model U.N. experience was, for Shannon, not an entirely positive one though, for during discussions in the committees and caucuses at the actual conference (as opposed to the social activities at the end of each day), she reported feeling painfully self-conscious about the content of what she was saying. She didn't want to just repeat statements like, “I support the ceasefire” that other delegates were making again and again, and she longed to make substantive comments, but couldn't think of anything to say that she considered suitably meaningful or intellectual. Referring back to the story she had told me in our May 2009 interview about when she thought she was speaking to the McDonald's employee in English, but was in fact so nervous that it was actually Chinese that

was coming out of her mouth, she told me, “I consider this experience just like the embarrassing experience that I had in the United States” and went on to explain:

When that experience happened, that makes me feel terrible and scared to speak in English. And this time, it’s the same – not afraid of speaking English, but I’m afraid that I’m speaking something meaningless. It’s based on the content. Before, I’m afraid of talking in English, but now I’m not – no longer. I’m no longer afraid of speaking English, but I’m afraid of speaking something meaningless.

While Shannon reported having no such fear of saying something vacuous or superficial when using English to communicate in social situations, such as the Model U.N. social activities, “discussing on the specific issue and very very serious issues,” she maintained, was a very different matter. Having achieved a level of English proficiency that enabled her to participate as an active member in the imagined global community of English users, Shannon was now deeming this level of proficiency inadequate for confident participation in specific sub-communities. Like Gigi, she was now striving for a level of proficiency that would allow her to communicate her thoughts eloquently on a wide variety of specific topics.

All of her experiences at the World Model U.N. conference, Shannon told me, had served as a sort of wake-up call, reminding her to take full advantage of each and every learning opportunity that was available to her. Comparing her attitude before and after the conference, she explained:

Before, I just want to graduate as soon as possible, and I just don’t

want to stay in here wasting my time doing something meaningless. But after I went to Taipei, now I think I still have a lot of chances to learn in school, so I should put some more effort on what I'm doing now – especially on the language learning.

Both the experience of seeing first-hand on a large scale the importance of English proficiency at the World Model U.N. conference and her perceived inability to express adequately meaningful thoughts on serious issues there, Shannon asserted, had served to push her harder – “Push me harder on reading, on studying, on focusing on my study,” she proclaimed. And she vowed then in our March 2010 interview that she would indeed do her best to exert more effort in her remaining days at Saint Agnes, regardless of how remedial or meaningless she felt her lessons to be.

9.6.4 Computer-Mediated English Use Update

Shannon told me in our March 2010 interview that she no longer talked with her internet friends from France and Italy, but continued to maintain communication with her Spanish internet buddy. Her interaction with this Spanish friend, however, had been drastically reduced from the twice per week sessions she had reported in May of 2009. “He transferred to another place to work, so he didn't have a lot of time,” she explained. “He doesn't have a lot of time to come on the internet, so maybe now once or twice a month.”

Even though she had never met her Spanish internet friend in person, Shannon told me that she had come to regard him as a good friend. And from her

description of their conversations, the cyberspace interaction that the two of them engaged in did indeed seem quite different from the superficial small talk typical of much internet discussion. “We’ll always discuss some issue that is very serious,” she told me. “Like recently, we have discussed Arab and Israel conflicts for quite a long time.” Despite their political focus, these conversations, Shannon maintained, never got heated or angry. Both of them were simply seeking outside perspectives on political issues. “We just ask different aspects,” she told me. “Like I’m in here. I receive messages from all the Taiwanese voices, but I still want to hear some other aspects from Europeans or Spanish people.”

Shannon also continued to use Facebook, and although fewer than 10% of her 300+ Facebook friends were foreigners, she still used a large amount of English on the site for her status postings and comments on friends’ photos and postings. These included short comments, such as “I hate my hair!!!!” and “Shame on ME!!!!,” but also longer bits of English text, such as the following response to a friend asking how a class presentation went:

Oh, thanx for asking. The presentation was great, but i was too nervous.
I think Aaron liked it, so i guess it was not that bad lo.. BTW, we will
meet very soon...and PLZ remember the dictation test...haha!!!

9.6.5 France

Another one of Shannon’s Facebook status postings in English that really got my attention just days before our March 2010 interview was “I’m going to France for a whole year in the end of this year!!!!!!!!!!!!!!” Considering all the

disparaging comments she had made about French just ten months earlier, I was quite surprised to read this. In our interview a few days later, Shannon brought up the topic by saying, “I know I said I hate French,” and added that she still considered her prior experience learning the language “terrible.” She then informed me that she had applied for and received a place in an exchange student program with a university in France. Explaining her decision to apply for and accept this opportunity in spite of her still decidedly negative feelings regarding the French language, Shannon told me:

Maybe because I read too much news and articles about the recession and unemployment – the increasing unemployment. And so I think only English – to speak only English and Chinese is not enough, and there’s a lot of people in Taiwan can speak English. Maybe they don’t speak that well, but they can. So that made me feel like I shouldn’t waste the time that I put before learning French.

Shannon depicted her decision then as a pragmatic one – an attempt to make herself more marketable in an increasingly competitive job market. She also admitted, however, that her dissatisfaction with the Saint Agnes Translation & Interpretation program influenced her decision as well – at least the decision to apply for a year-long exchange program instead of one lasting only a single semester. “I just didn’t want to stay in this department!” she remarked with a laugh. And taking part in this year-long program would indeed enable her to escape her Translation & Interpretation department, for upon returning to Taiwan after a year, she will have fulfilled all her requirements for graduation from the

Saint Agnes two-year college. “Our department is not that strict,” she told me. “If you take twenty-five credits there, you can cover it no matter what kind of class you take.”

Shannon was optimistic about her chances of gaining a far higher level of French proficiency in France than she had been able to achieve studying the language in Taiwan. She was fully expecting, however, to have a difficult time there, at least at the beginning. “I know the beginning will be very difficult because of the language problem,” she told me. “I’m not very good in French, so maybe at the beginning, I’ll use English more than French...if I can.” Although she acknowledged that she would surely have to endure French grammar instruction at the university’s French language school, she envisioned her experience learning French in France as far less stressful than her experience studying French in Taiwan – more like her introduction to English when she was in elementary school:

Basically, I mentioned before that Taiwanese teachers always teaching grammar, and I hate that. So I just want to go over there and, like, start from learning daily conversation and, like, what I learned with English...Like when I first learned English, I started from the daily conversation and the spelling and the pronunciation, and now I just want the same pattern as I learned English.

Shannon was fairly certain that she would be able to replicate this pattern in her French language learning in France. She will, of course, be able to focus on conversational French in informal social situations there. The extent to which the

French instruction in her classrooms at the French language school will conform to the pattern she envisioned, however, is far less certain.

Throughout our discussion of her impending experience in France, Shannon repeatedly reiterated how ironic it was that she was willingly subjecting herself to a whole year of French immersion. “I just didn’t want to have any relationship with French before!” she remarked at one point. This plan, however, was actually not wholly inconsistent with what she had told me before. In our May 2009 interview, she had, after all, said that she could very well take up French study again one day if she had a good reason to do so. And while they had nothing to do with any close affiliation to France, the French people, or the language itself, increasing her marketability in the job market and escaping a college program she was unhappy with were, for Shannon, indeed very valid reasons. Shannon’s personal development project, while still nowhere near as ambitious as Rachel’s, had expanded to include French, and she appeared to be embracing the enterprise culture aspiration of greater flexibility in the job marketplace.

9.7 Updated Plans for the Future

In our March 2010 interview, Shannon told me that she still planned to work for a year or two to save money to study abroad. Instead of doing so with the definite intention of studying translation and interpretation, however, Shannon’s updated plan was to use that time that she is working and saving money to investigate other options. As she explained:

I would still work for a year and saving money for further studying,

but not on translation and interpretation...I think I should say not one hundred percent sure, but maybe. I don't know – because I want to use the whole year while I am working and also find some other field that I'm interested...because in the college, we always learn English language, French, and interpreting. Then I don't have other time to think of what else that I'm interested in.

Just as she had not completely ruled out future study of French in our May 2009 interview, Shannon here did not absolutely discount the possibility that she might continue with translation and interpretation when she returns to school. Her time in the Translation & Interpretation program at Saint Agnes had indeed dampened her enthusiasm for the field considerably though, and she thought that there must certainly be some profession that she could be more passionate about. She did have several ideas in mind, such as public relations and advertising, that she planned to investigate, but her intention was to keep her options open.

9.8 Relationship with English

Even with Shannon's recent revelation about the international utility of English at the World Model U.N. conference, she still, at the time of our March 2010 interview, claimed to associate English most strongly with the U.S., and acquiring American accented English continued to be the goal she strove for – a goal that, in my opinion, she had already pretty much achieved, for her accent was remarkably similar to that of many young people in southern California. While she didn't use *like* as a discourse marker nearly as profusely as Audrey did, her language,

throughout our interviews, was also peppered with this feature quite common in the speech of North American young people⁴⁹.

Just as she had previously reported watching the American TV series *Friends* for the expressed purpose of exposing herself to relatively standard American English, Shannon had, in the ten months since our May 2009 interview, taken further steps to cultivate her American accent by watching ten entire seasons of the reality TV series *America's Next Top Model*. “They have thirteen seasons until now,” she informed me. “And I watched it from season four ‘till thirteen.” Although this series was available on DVD in Taiwan, Shannon chose to download the episodes from YouTube. “On YouTube, that is the original versions,” she explained, “so it won’t have subtitles.” The dialogue in *America's Next Top Model*, she reported, was more difficult to understand than that in *Friends*, and this is not surprising, considering the unscripted nature of reality TV. “It’s hard because people speaking very fast and use a lot of the words that we don’t normally use,” she told me. “But it’s better. I get more and more understanding after I watched several episodes.”

When I asked Shannon if she considered English to be *her* language, as opposed to a foreign language, she unhesitatingly replied affirmatively. “Yeah, I consider it as *my* language,” she answered. “Um-hmm, just like people when they are ABC [American-born Chinese] – when they are born in America, they have two languages...I would consider French as a foreign language.” I subsequently

⁴⁹ Tagliamonte (2005) describes *like*, *just*, and *so* (used as discourse markers) as “salient features of Toronto Youth English” (p. 1911) and notes that in her own study, use of *like* as a discourse marker declined as her informants approached the age of 20. Fuller (2003), however, describes “the age boundaries for use of *like*” as beginning with “speakers born in or after the late 1950’s” (p. 372).

wrapped up our March 2010 interview by reading Shannon the quote from Warschauer cited at the beginning of this dissertation predicting that speakers of English-as-a-second-language worldwide would increasingly use English “less as an object of foreign study, and more as an additional language of their own, to have an impact on and change the world” and that these speakers would “use English together with technology to express their identity and make their voices heard” (Warschauer, 2000, p. 530). After reading her this quotation, I asked Shannon if that described her. She confidently responded with an enthusiastic “yes!” and added, “That’s good!” At the time, I assumed that Shannon’s “That’s good!” was an expression of admiration for the eloquence with which Warschauer stated those views. Upon reading the transcript of our conversation later, however, I realized that she could have instead been saying that it was good that she herself could be counted among those Warschauer was referring to. Either way, it was clear to me that Shannon did indeed have the confidence to proudly proclaim English as a language of her own⁵⁰.

9.9 Conclusion to Shannon’s Story

Shannon’s story shows that extensive and prolonged participation in communities where foreign languages are used is not necessarily a requirement for one to gain a strong affiliation with, and even ownership of, a language, for Shannon had far less participation in such communities than any of the other three focal participants in this study. This is not to say, however, that she had no

⁵⁰ Additional evidence of Shannon’s sense of English ownership was the fact that she identified and pointed out my (her former English teacher’s) typing errors on the final draft of this chapter.

community involvement or investment. She did, of course, invest in online communities composed of a few European interlocutors, particularly the Spanish internet friend with whom she communicated with great regularity at one point. This and her interaction (both online and in person) with the community composed of her cousins in southern California did undoubtedly have an impact on her confidence with spoken English. She also invested quite heavily in the World Model U.N. community and the impact of her participation in this community on her identity as an English speaker was indeed phenomenal, but this participation was not at all prolonged since the conference only lasted a week. Also short-lived was the community composed of Shannon and the foreign World Games VIP guests at her volunteer hotel position, which she only held for one month.

Shannon could be said to have been investing in imagined communities in the United States as well though, and, as I mentioned earlier, this investment began to be nurtured early on with her first English teacher implanting images in her head of the luxurious lifestyle that could be had there. From junior high school, when she and her best friend made a pact to both attend UCLA together, Shannon's investment in English was also an investment in the image of her future self using English to interact with Americans in the United States. Although she eventually abandoned her dream of attending UCLA, she continued to envision herself studying, living, and later working in the U.S., focusing her investment specifically on the image of herself interacting and using standard American English with Americans in Washington or Chicago.

From the start of her English learning experience at age nine, Shannon's main investment, however, has been directly in the English language, and this has been primarily due to her fierce competitiveness and desire to always "be at the top" where English language proficiency was concerned. While other focal participants also invested directly in the language for the purpose of retaining the *good at English* aspects of their identities, this was truly an obsession for Shannon, for she was not satisfied with viewing herself as simply *good at English*. Until the final months of this study, when her competitiveness began to wane, it was being *the best at English*, relative to her peers, that fueled her investment in English as she constantly fought to claim and retain this aspect of her identity. Various experiences, such as her temporary hotel work assisting World Games VIP guests, being enlisted by her mother to speak English to her brother, and her jobs tutoring not only children and fellow college students, but also college professors, in conversational English all served to position her as an expert in spoken English, reinforcing her identity as someone with English abilities superior to others around her.

Shannon's story, however, is not exclusively one of triumphs and successful investments. In instances where her efforts seemed to be in vain and she saw no hope of outshining those around her, as was the case with her study of French and courses in the Saint Agnes Translation & Interpretation program, she greatly reduced her level of investment and came to regard these endeavors quite negatively. Her confidence also took a beating with university entrance exams, which tend to focus almost exclusively on the intricacies of English grammar and

thus provided an arguably less than accurate assessment of her overall English expertise. Although she diligently began preparing for these exams well in advance, Shannon reported that her confidence waned with each practice exam she completed, and ultimately, she failed to achieve a score high enough to gain admittance to the prestigious national university she wanted to attend. Such an experience would, of course, not be good for anyone's confidence, but for someone like Shannon, whose self-image relied so heavily on her superior English abilities (with spoken English anyway), it was devastating. It was this entrance exam experience and her resulting loss of confidence that served as the backdrop for her self-rating of 0 for boldness on the written questionnaire and our May 2009 interview, where she was considering a greater focus on grammar for English classes she might teach in the future, despite her frequently stated aversion to this pedagogical practice.

Shannon happily reported during our March 2010 interview, however, that her diminished confidence at that time had been only temporary. "Before, I'm kind of losing confidence," she told me. "But now, I think it's getting more and more after I have several experiences." When I asked her what specific experiences helped her to regain her confidence, she replied, "Like the World MUN [Model U.N.]. Yes, and working in the hotel and, like, in the future I go to France – like the experience that normally people won't get." It was experiences that set her apart from others and the opportunity for such experiences in the future then that helped Shannon overcome the blow the entrance examinations had dealt to her confidence as an English user. Although some of her experiences at the World

Model U.N. did alert her to the fact that she still had a ways to go before she could confidently express herself when discussing some topics, Shannon, like Rachel, did not feel that such linguistic deficiencies exempted her from claiming ownership in the English language.

The chance to study in France for a year is indeed an opportunity that many Taiwanese would not get, and there are, of course, structural causes for such inequity. To start with, many families would not be able to afford the expense of sending a child abroad for a year⁵¹. Although it does not carry the brand capital of a prestigious national university, Saint Agnes does also have a certain amount of what Abelmann *et al.* (2009) call “campus capital” (p. 233) in that it offers far more study abroad opportunities for its students than many other Taiwanese tertiary institutions. Shannon recognized her fortunate position and was wary of taking for granted her access to such opportunities. Thus, her self-improvement project intensified with her vow to take full advantage of her privileged situation.

Shannon’s story vividly illustrates both the power and pitfalls of extreme competitiveness in language learning. When intense investment in a language does result in perfect scores on tests and an image of oneself as superior to others where that language is concerned, a high level of affiliation with the language can indeed be obtained. Failure to meet such stellar expectations for oneself, however, can result in overwhelming frustration and a debilitating loss of confidence.

Throughout her language learning narratives, Shannon showed acute awareness of

⁵¹ Saint Agnes did provide some financial assistance for students chosen to participate in its study abroad programs, but this did not begin to cover all the costs, and participation in these programs was still prohibitively expensive for many Saint Agnes students like Rachel, who came from families with more limited means.

her own competitive nature and the extent to which her sense of self relied on her English language abilities setting her apart from others, explicitly pointing out that her use of English on Facebook and practices like pretending to be a foreigner were indeed efforts to project her identity as an English speaker and distinguish her from others in Taiwanese society with decidedly lower levels of English proficiency. Will her English abilities continue to serve this function of differentiating her from others in France? To what extent will the French language skills she has already obtained in her courses at Saint Agnes enable her to effectively compete with others in her French-as-a-second-language classroom there? Could she even come to regard French as *her* language, as Rachel has? These are just a few of the questions I will seek to answer as I keep in touch with Shannon and see how this next chapter of her story unfolds. Her year of French immersion will certainly strengthen her French skills to the point that she will be more competitive on the job market. Whether she will be able to nurture an affiliation with the French language, however, is far from certain. Just as she left the possibilities for her future career wide open, so too are the possible learning trajectories she could find herself experiencing in her continuing quest “to be at the top.”

Chapter 10

Discussion and Implications

Having delved into the lives of the four focal participants, chronicling their feelings and experiences in some detail with a bit of analysis as to the relationship between their various investments and their affiliations with the foreign languages in their linguistic repertoires, I will now, in this final chapter, broaden the scope a bit for some synthesis of my findings. Addressing each of the study's research questions in turn, I will present a cross-participant analysis⁵² in which the main themes from the four narratives will be discussed. I will then discuss implications for theory, pedagogical practice, and policy before concluding with recommendations for future research.

10.1 Research Question 1

How and to what extent do participants' linguistic abilities impact their identities?

I will begin discussion of this research question by focusing on English language abilities, which, for each of the four focal participants, have clearly had a tremendous impact on their identities. Although participants had varying experiences, a few themes did occur repeatedly in their narratives. To further examine the nature of the impact of the English language on their identities, I will,

⁵² Although including some experiences from the study's stand-by participants would allow for some interesting contrasts, I have, in the interest of maintaining focus and adhering to university imposed length restrictions, refrained from doing so.

therefore, organize the discussion around these common themes of *Differentiation from Others via English*, *English Cram School Experiences*, and *English Speaking Community Investment*, and then discuss the impact participants' abilities in languages other than English had on their identities.

10.1.1 Differentiation from Others via English

Any abilities we might have, be they artistic abilities, musical abilities, or language abilities, cannot help but impact our identities, and this impact is compounded when those around us lack comparable abilities. The idea that their English abilities set them apart from peers with lower levels of English proficiency and Taiwanese society in general was a theme that appeared repeatedly in participants' narratives. Shannon was definitely the most upfront in identifying this role of English in her life, proclaiming unequivocally that her games of pretending to be a foreigner with no knowledge of Chinese and her use of English on Facebook were efforts to show off her English abilities and distinguish herself from the majority of people in Taiwanese society. Even when the intent is not to show off abilities though, each instance where one is able to use a language successfully in a context where others could not do so (or could not do so as successfully) serves to bolster the speaker's identity as someone with superior language abilities. All of the participants, for example, recounted in their narratives instances where they were able to serve as translators for friends, acquaintances, and family members, or use their English abilities to assist foreigners in Taiwan. It is this sort of identity construction site that Mead (1934)

is commenting on when he states:

The superiority is not the end in view. It is a means for the preservation of the self. We have to distinguish ourselves from other people, and this is accomplished by doing something which other people cannot do, or cannot do as well (p. 208).

Rachel's story about a Taiwanese girl approaching her in a nightclub and expressing admiration for her English abilities after overhearing her speak English fluently with foreign friends is yet another good example an incident which serves to reinforce a self-image of one who has superior English abilities. As Bucholtz & Hall (2005) state, "identity emerges from the specific conditions of linguistic interaction" (p. 588), and in this interaction, the Taiwanese girl's recognition of Rachel's superior English abilities positioned Rachel as somewhat of an English expert, and Rachel subsequently positioned herself as such an expert by advising the girl "to speak more and to not be afraid to make mistakes."

Being positioned in some way as an English expert was a common occurrence in participants' narratives. This positioning occurred not only with strangers, but also with family members and others close to participants. Shannon's mother enlisting her as an English conversation partner for her brother so that his spoken English could improve was one example of such positioning by family members. Another was Gigi's cousin requesting her translation services when a visiting foreigner was unable to communicate in Chinese.

Various jobs that participants held, both volunteer and paid positions, also positioned them as experts in English, relative to the skills of the society as a

whole. Gigi's volunteer position as an English tour guide at the art museum and Shannon's work at the hotel catering to the needs of English speaking VIP guests both served to highlight their English abilities and distinguish them from those with lower levels of proficiency, who would be unable to carry out such duties. The same would apply as well to the English tutoring and cram school teaching positions that all the focal participants held during the course of the study. Shannon's tutorials with college professors much older than herself likely had an especially strong impact on her view of herself as someone with superior English language abilities. Although all of the jobs mentioned above certainly required some use of Chinese, Audrey's promotional work for the restaurant/bar/nightclub that sought both Taiwanese and foreign customers truly positioned her as a bilingual Chinese/English expert, since it highlighted not only her English abilities, but also her Chinese skills that were necessary to attract Taiwanese customers – something her managers there lacked.

For some participants, the image of themselves as good at English, relative to their peers, started to be nurtured fairly early in life. Shannon's image of herself as one with superior English abilities, for example, was cultivated early on as the "top student" in her private group lessons and elementary school English classes. Gigi's English tutoring and cram school classes throughout her elementary school years provided her with a better knowledge of English than her classmates when her public school English education began her sixth grade year, prompting her to comment that she "felt a certain superior sensation" with these classmates.

Once the image of themselves as being better at English than their peers had been firmly established, some participants found maintaining this aspect of their identities to be a real struggle. When Gigi first entered Saint Agnes and found that her English abilities paled in comparison to those of some classmates, for example, she expended much effort to reclaim the *good at English* aspect of her identity. Shannon depicted the maintenance of her self-image of superiority where English was concerned as a continuous struggle in which the scores she received on assignments, tests, and exams served as confirmation of her superior abilities. Her comment that “once you get a hundred, then the next time, you cannot, you know, get only 60 or 80” clearly illustrates this struggle.

For Shannon, this intense focus on grades and preoccupation with achieving higher scores than her peers was truly an obsession – far more so than for any of the other focal participants. This sort of fierce competitiveness is hardly unusual in Taiwan. With an abundance of high-stakes examinations and pressure to achieve admittance to prestigious high schools and universities, competitiveness is, after all, pervasive in Taiwanese society, and competitiveness in the classroom is encouraged by the common practice of ranking students based on test scores. Even in this highly competitive environment though, the degree to which Shannon felt compelled to outscore her peers struck me as rather extreme. For her, this extreme competitiveness was reserved only for English. Like most of the study’s participants, Shannon disliked math and science, and her lackluster grades in these subjects of course failed to distinguish her at all from others. Although she did well in Chinese language classes, she was far less competitive with Chinese

than English, probably because excelling in Chinese offered considerably less opportunity for truly differentiating oneself in Taiwan.

Because Saint Agnes was considered to be one of the best tertiary institutions in Taiwan for studying languages and had the distinction of being the only school in Taiwan where English was the medium of instruction for all courses (in the English department anyway), most Saint Agnes students tended to believe their language abilities were superior to students at other schools. “They just think they are better than others,” one teacher declared, and she proceeded to tell me a story about accompanying a Saint Agnes student to a speech contest this student was competing in. The student won second place, but was absolutely devastated because she couldn’t believe she had lost to a student who attended a school that was not at all renowned for language instruction. As was previously discussed, one area that distinguished Saint Agnes English instruction from other institutions was its emphasis on spoken language with relatively little explicit grammar instruction (compared to other Taiwanese schools). Participants were justifiably quite proud of their English fluency and, in their narratives, repeatedly voiced their approval of Saint Agnes’ English pedagogy and utter disdain for the grammar-centric focus of other schools. Just as the Saint Agnes speech contestant was devastated by her loss to a non-Saint Agnes student, however, so too was Shannon when students with far less spoken English proficiency scored higher than her on the university entrance exam due to their superior grammar knowledge.

Although all the participants of this study mentioned, at some point in their narratives, instances where they were the ones who felt intimidated by the superior English skills of others, such experiences were relatively few compared to the feelings of superiority they reported feeling more often. Even in the Saint Agnes classroom, where the presence of a few classmates that had spent substantial amounts of their childhoods abroad caused almost all participants to feel at least a bit intimidated, some were still able to maintain their feeling of English superiority by focusing on their particular areas of English expertise. For Rachel, this was accomplished through confidently expressing herself orally in class, and for Shannon, it was through high scores on assignments, tests, and exams, which, for her, served as teachers' recognition of her superior English abilities.

English also helped participants see themselves as upwardly mobile individuals, and they all expressed the belief that some proficiency in the language was absolutely necessary in order to land a good job in Taiwan's competitive job market. Each of them also expressed concern and anxiety, however, about the fact that there are, today, a growing number of Taiwanese who are highly proficient in English, and that their English abilities alone may not adequately differentiate them from competitors when seeking employment. Rachel was acquiring business expertise that, combined with her English abilities, could make her highly competitive in the job market, but she cited her French skills as a factor that could give her an additional edge against the competition. Rachel's French, of course, had already progressed to the point that she could participate in

business meetings conducted in French, and by the end of the study, she had set her sights on learning Spanish to make herself even more marketable. Since all the participants already had some French proficiency as a result of studying it as a minor for three years, most (all but Gigi, who was focusing her efforts on Italian) saw continued French study as a very practical course of action. Even Shannon, who, at the beginning of the study, was eager to bid farewell to French forever, eventually decided that continued study of the language she had previously described as “annoying and unnecessary” would, in fact, be a wise move. The fear, expressed by Shannon and other participants, that English alone would fail to distinguish them from other job competitors in a world where English proficiency is increasingly commonplace is indeed a valid concern, and seeking to acquire proficiency in additional languages to increase their competitiveness appears to be a good strategy, for as Grin (2001) predicts, “the rewards for speaking English will be less and less, and other skills will be required to achieve socio-economic success. First and foremost among those skills are languages other than English” (p. 75).

10.1.2 English Cram School Experiences

I have to admit that before interviewing participants for this study, I had a decidedly negative view of private supplementary education (or *shadow education*⁵³, as it is often referred to in the education literature), considering it an unreasonable burden for children that deprived them of their childhoods and

⁵³ Reasons for the use of the term *shadow education* include the fact that it exists only because mainstream education exists, it imitates the orientation of mainstream education, and it receives considerably less public attention than mainstream education (Bray, 2006).

valuable play time. As Bray (2006) notes, it furthermore “maintains and exacerbates social stratification” since “prosperous families with the necessary resources can invest in greater quantities and better qualities of tutoring than can their less well-endowed neighbors” (p. 526). Several participants of this study, however, reported having marvelous experiences in cram school⁵⁴ and private group lessons during their elementary and junior high school years, crediting these experiences with instilling in them a passion for English. Shannon, in fact, gave this credit entirely to a single teacher.

In her critical discourse analysis of Taiwanese cram school advertising, Lin (2009) asserts, “Private English education in Taiwan has been so rampant that it diminishes the role of public education” (p. 9). And this does indeed appear to be the case, judging from the narratives of participants in this study. All four focal participants had some form of supplementary English education during their childhoods, and these supplementary classes were often depicted as being vastly superior or considerably more challenging than their public school English classes. Shannon, for instance, spoke at length about her supplementary English education experiences, but had very little to say about her public elementary school English classes, even when I asked her about these specifically. She seemed to consider them quite inconsequential – hardly worth commenting on.

For Gigi, the only significant aspect of her public elementary school English classes seemed to be the fact that these classes allowed her the aforementioned

⁵⁴ The Chinese term for shadow education schools is *buxiban* (補習班), which, in Taiwan, is almost always translated into English as *cram school*. In the Taiwan context, however, lessons at these schools are generally ongoing (rather than short-term for exam preparation) and would elsewhere be referred to as *enrichment centers*.

opportunity to feel superior to her classmates. Although she had not been enthusiastic at all about the English cram school lessons and tutoring she received throughout her childhood and was actually unable to even remember much from these experiences, it was the knowledge this shadow education had given her that allowed her to feel a sense of superiority over her public school classmates⁵⁵ when English classes began for her there in the sixth grade, sparking interest in the language that she previously had not had.

Several participants contrasted the passive learning of public elementary school English classrooms with a more active participatory shadow education experience. Rachel reported loving English when it was introduced to her in a cram school at the age of six, largely due to the manner in which it was taught, through songs and games, but the focus on grammar in her fifth grade elementary school class later served to greatly reduce her enthusiasm for studying the language. Although Audrey's cram school experience, starting at the age of twelve, did focus on grammar, she had fond memories of these lessons, largely due to the teachers' active participatory approach to grammar instruction. "The cram school was pretty fun," she remembered. "The teachers were all very funny and great. I think they tried to make students to learn English with joy, so they can stay at the cram school – not going to some other schools."

⁵⁵ Stand-by participant Fiara, who had not had any supplementary English education before elementary school English instruction began for her in the third grade, reported being at the other side of the English proficiency divide. "I was kind of shocked when I know that many people in my class, they have studied English earlier," she remembered. Unwilling to accept the intimidation she felt as a result of these classmates' superior knowledge of English, Fiara requested that her parents enroll her in a cram school, and they agreed to do so.

As Bray (2006) points out, there is much variation in the nature and quality of supplementary education even within a single country, and the greater competition among providers in urban areas dictates that the quality of private educational services available to city dwellers tends to be higher than in rural areas. Rachel found this to be the case as she attended various English cram schools in rural Kaohsiung County that, in her opinion, were vastly inferior to the one she had attended in Taipei. Gigi didn't have anything particularly negative to report about her various private tutoring and cram school experiences in her rural hometown (where her mother actually owned a cram school), but none of these experiences were at all memorable for her. In Taipei, Shannon's group lessons that sparked her passion for English were organized and conducted by one individual teacher in a rented classroom, and later in this teacher's own home. The cram school that Audrey started attending in Kaohsiung City when she was twelve years old was geared toward older children and mirrored the junior high school classes' emphasis on grammar, since that is the knowledge parents believe children of this age need for their high school entrance examinations. Despite the fact that she reported enjoying these classes, Audrey's lack of passion for English (relative to that of other participants) prior to enrolling in Saint Agnes might well be due to the fact that she had no private English education besides the courses focusing on grammar when she was much older than the other participants were when they began their private supplementary English lessons. Since her early exposure to the language, after all, was mostly through grammar rules, it is not at

all surprising that she regarded English at the time as “just like other subjects – not very special...like something you gotta learn.”

Shannon and Audrey clearly did not regard their supplementary English lessons as a burden, nor did Rachel when she was attending the cram school lessons that she enjoyed in Taipei. Gigi may not have been terribly enthusiastic about her private tutoring as a young child, but definitely appreciated the advantage it gave her over her classmates later in public school English classes. Participants’ experiences with English supplementary education show that these lessons can indeed play a powerful role in helping to initially establish a passionate interest in the language, particularly when students are lucky enough to have a teacher they considered to be an ideal role model. With such stories of positive early experiences in cram schools and other private lessons, it is easy to see why the English shadow education industry in Taiwan is flourishing. These courses can go well beyond the basic instruction of the typical public elementary school classroom, often using more active participatory pedagogical approaches, appealing to the demands of parents and students alike. The societal inequality and proficiency divide in public school English classrooms that private supplementary courses exacerbate is, therefore, unlikely to subside, and the identities of those on both sides of the divide will be impacted – by having English abilities superior or inferior to that of their classmates.

10.1.3 English-Speaking Community Investment

As has already been pointed out repeatedly in focal participants' story chapters, investment in identities as members of various communities, both real and imagined, can result not only in an increased proficiency in the language used by a community, but also a strengthened affiliation with that language. As Ryan (2006) suggests is often the case for English language learners in contexts where opportunities to use the language are scant, an imagined global community of English speakers was indeed, in varying degrees, a focus of investment for all four focal participants, as were imagined communities in specific locations that participants envisioned themselves in the future. A considerable number of non-imagined communities, however, were also represented in participants' narratives.

Each of the four focal participants reported some degree of involvement in at least one CoP in which routine community practice involved the use of English. For Gigi, this CoP was Saint Agnes' English Debate Society. Audrey and Rachel both reported extensive English use at their workplace CoPs, and Audrey also participated in the comedy troupe CoP composed mostly of Anglophone Canadians. Although they were only together for one week, the attendees of the World Model U.N. conference that Shannon attended also constituted a CoP – one in which the specific purpose of their interaction was to reenact past U.N. sessions, and all communication between participants was conducted in English. Shannon admitted that, in her official capacity as the Nepal delegate, she didn't actually speak very much during the conference proceedings due to her reluctance to

repeat what others had said or appear insufficiently intellectual. Even her minimal contributions in committees and caucuses, however, would count as *legitimate peripheral participation*, which Lave & Wenger (1991) consider to be integral to the process of moving toward full participation in a CoP. As Shannon and the other three focal participants engaged in the “joint negotiated enterprise” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76) of their various CoPs, their investment in these communities resulted not only in increased English proficiency⁵⁶, but also in an increased affiliation with the English language, for as the communities gained more and more importance in their lives and for their identities, so too did English, which enabled their participation.

All four focal participants reported at least some English interaction with Discourse communities composed of foreign friends and acquaintances. In some cases, participants’ interlocutors in these Discourse communities were from traditionally English speaking countries. These included Audrey’s Anglophone South African boyfriend, Greg, and her group of mostly Canadian friends; Rachel’s American friends; and Shannon’s American-born cousins in Southern California. Just as common, if not more so, was English interaction in Discourse communities in which interlocutors had learned English as a second or foreign language. These included Gigi’s Italian boyfriend, Amedeo, and his friends in Italy, as well as her Czech friend Evelina and Swiss friend Nathalie; Rachel’s French ex-boyfriend; and the VIP hotel guests that Shannon served in her volunteer position during the World Games.

⁵⁶ As Holmes & Meyerhoff (1999) note, a community of practice “inevitably involves the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence” (p. 174).

Participants also frequently reported interacting in internet Discourse communities. Especially popular was the use of the internet communication program Skype, and all the internet buddies that participants reported meeting and interacting with using Skype were also individuals for whom English was not learned as a ‘native’ language. Gigi initially met Amedeo using Skype, and Shannon reported regular interaction – at one point as often as twice a week – with her Spanish internet friend.

All the Discourse communities listed above obviously represent a huge range of investments on the part of participants. When they initially went online to chat with a few foreign strangers, their investments in identities as members of these online Discourse communities were quite minimal. A great deal of investment, however, was, of course, expended by Gigi, Audrey, and Rachel in their identities as members of Discourse communities that included their boyfriends and others quite close to them. Like the focal participants’ investments in CoPs though, any investment by participants in Discourse communities in which English was the medium of communication served to strengthen their affiliations with English and bolster their identities as legitimate speakers of English. Each and every interaction, after all, is an identity construction site, and successful communication in English, even when one cares little about the relationship with the interlocutor, cannot help but increase confidence in one’s linguistic abilities.

Since English is the medium of instruction at Saint Agnes for all courses offered by the English department, all participants did engage in in-class English communication with teachers and classmates. Many of them described their

English communication with fellow students in this classroom Discourse community, however, as far from authentic meaningful conversation. Outside of class, some participants reported that Saint Agnes students often include bits of English in their Chinese conversations – short phrases and sentences like *sorry*, *excuse me*, and *What did you say?* On Facebook, however, English use among participants for communication with their Taiwanese friends and classmates went far beyond a bit of code mixing, for in the Facebook Discourse community of present and former Saint Agnes students, copious amounts of English use appeared to be the norm. As Gigi remarked, “It seems more strange if you type Chinese.”

In his study of the motivations behind Thai speakers of English using English for written communication with other Thais, one of Glass’ (2009) study participants offered a very simple explanation for why he and his friends used English to write to one another: “Because we *can*.” In discussing their use of English with classmates on Facebook, my participants expressed basically the same idea. Gigi, for instance, said that she thought most of her classmates secretly wished to express themselves in English with classmates in face-to-face interactions as well, but were too self-conscious to do so, and Facebook provided them with a less face-threatening venue for such expression. Shannon went further, arguing that online English use served to distinguish her and her Saint Agnes classmates from Taiwanese friends attending other high schools and universities who seldom, if ever, use English on Facebook. Regardless of their motivations for doing so, using English in the Facebook community of present

and former Saint Agnes students served as a means for participants to project their identities as English users.

All the participants did, of course, also use Chinese on Facebook – in varying amounts. And the use of both English and Chinese, sometimes in the same comment or status posting, allowed them to display their dual local and global identities. Although the ratio of English to Chinese use varied a lot from participant to participant, I don't believe any of them would have considered complete avoidance of English to be a viable option, for in this online Discourse community, exclusive use of Chinese would indeed have been a marked choice – one that would have projected an explicit rejection of English. This would by no means be a message any of them would have wished to send out to their present and former classmates. Those with foreign Facebook friends who could not read Chinese or Taiwanese friends with little English proficiency did risk excluding portions of their social networks⁵⁷, and were, therefore, faced with decisions regarding the ratio of English to Chinese they employed for Facebook postings. Audrey, for example, had a huge number of foreign Facebook friends, and her use of Chinese there was almost non-existent. For Audrey and the other three focal participants, the community of present and former Saint Agnes classmates was just one of several represented in their lists of Facebook friends. Through their personal Facebook status postings, postings on friends' Facebook pages, and comments on friends' photos, as well as interactions on more private Facebook applications like the mail and chat functions, participants invested in their

⁵⁷ This is arguably becoming less of a problem as advances are made in machine translation. Using Google's translation feature, for example, one can have a page of text translated in seconds, and these translations, while usually quite awkward, are more often than not understandable.

identities as members of these various communities. And as they did so, their choice of using English (in varying amounts) not only contributed to the shaping of Discourse norms, but also served to project and strengthen their identities as English users.

Investment in Discourse communities composed of foreigners, on Facebook and other online venues as well as face-to-face interactions, also strengthened participants' conceptualizations of themselves as global citizens – members of an imagined global community of English users (Ryan, 2006). The use of English with Taiwanese classmates could have bolstered this aspect of participants' identities as well, simply due to the international associations participants had with the English language, for as Dörnyei (2005) explains, language users are affected by “a ‘virtual’ or ‘metaphorical’ identification with the sociocultural loading of a language, and in the case of the undisputed world language, English, this identification would be associated with a non-parochial, globalized world citizen identity” (p. 97). All four focal participants voiced agreement with the notion, so prevalent in the Taiwanese government's discourses of competitiveness and internationalization, that obtaining English proficiency was indeed a necessary first step to achieving internationalization, and reiterated again and again the belief that English was absolutely essential for making one's voice heard outside of Taiwan. As they cultivated their identities as world citizens, an imagined global community of English users was clearly a focus of investment. Gigi, Audrey, and Rachel had each had substantial amounts of interaction with English speaking foreigners well before this study began, and had, for some time,

envisioned themselves as members of this imagined global community⁵⁸. For Gigi, membership in this imagined community of world citizens helped her to see herself as distinct from the majority of Taiwanese, whose worldview she perceived as extremely narrow. Shannon's sense of belonging to this imagined global community seemed to not be fully aroused until she participated in the World Model U.N. conference, where the fact that she was able to effectively communicate in English with conference delegates from all over the world truly made an impression on her.

All participants also invested in identities as members of imagined communities in specific places that they envisioned themselves living, working, and studying in the distant future. For Gigi and Rachel, these imagined communities were in Italy and France respectively, and they envisioned themselves using English in addition to Italian and French in these imagined communities. Audrey invested in an imagined community studying at Parson's School of Design in New York and Shannon in Chicago, Washington, or some other American city where she thought the English spoken might be more or less 'standard.' For all participants, investment in future imagined communities served, just like investment in an imagined global community of English users, to strengthen affiliations with English and impact their identities as English users, for participants' visions of themselves interacting in these communities were, in fact, very real, in spite of the fact that this engagement was just imagined.

⁵⁸ Note, however, that for Gigi and Audrey, mere membership in this imagined global community of English users did not automatically come with English language ownership privileges.

In their participation in English-speaking communities that involved actual engagement, study participants reported being accepted as members and their voices respected. This is a very important point since “the power to impose reception” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 75) is central to Norton Pierce’s (1995) notion of investment, in which the amount of “cultural capital” to be gained from investment in a language (or identity as a community member) relies on the extent to which one’s contributions to the community are valued by fellow members. In all the communities that participants reported participating in, their contributions did indeed appear to have been valued. Language investment can sometimes be curtailed by community acceptance though. In studies by Kanno (2003) and McKay & Wong (1996), for example, the easy acceptance of ESL participants by their Canadian and American peers, in large part due to their athletic prowess, caused them to cease efforts to increase their English proficiency. This was not the case, however, for my participants that found acceptance in English speaking communities, for they were able to identify areas in which improved proficiency would increase their cultural capital in their respective communities. Audrey strove to increase her proficiency to the point that she could better comprehend North American humor in English, an ability she believed would enable her to participate in the improvisational portions of shows put on by her comedy troupe CoP, while Gigi and Shannon shared the goal of being able to speak eloquently in English on a wide variety of subjects. Other members of these participants’ communities were not treating them as peripheral community members or full, but incompetent, members. The participants were instead voluntarily limiting

their own participation in certain activities or topics that they were not confident with, trying to avoid, as Shannon put it, “speaking something meaningless.” Community acceptance did facilitate participants’ participation, cultivating their identities as members, and strengthening their affiliations with English, but the belief that one has valid contributions to make to a community is another important cultural capital payoff, and on this count, participants still deemed further investment necessary.

10.1.4 Impact of Other Language Abilities on Participants’ Identities

Participants’ English abilities were, of course, not the only ones that impacted their identities. The other languages in their linguistic repertoires also played important roles in shaping their self conceptualizations. All participants’ linguistic repertoires, of course, included Mandarin Chinese and, since they all studied it as a minor for at least three years, French as well. Each of the participants (including Shannon) could also claim at least a bit of Tai-yu skill, and Gigi was quickly becoming proficient in a fifth language – Italian.

Although Gigi and Audrey claimed Tai-yu as their “mother tongue,” Mandarin Chinese was the language that all participants, for most of their lives, had the most experience using. Except for classes offered by the English department at Saint Agnes, it had been the medium of instruction for all of their education, and was the language they all had the greatest command of. Rachel attributed her close affiliation with Mandarin Chinese to the facility with which she was able to use it, telling me, “Chinese is the only one I can express real – real and deep –

feeling.” While other participants would, I believe, concur with this sentiment, the impact of Chinese, for Shannon and Audrey, went well beyond mere ease of use. For Shannon, Mandarin Chinese and her Chinese ethnic identity were inextricably intertwined. In stressing how important it was for her future children to speak Mandarin Chinese, she told me, “I think it’s identity because my children will be Chinese...so they should learn Mandarin.” Audrey claimed Tai-yu as her “mother tongue” and actually spoke Mandarin Chinese far less in her daily life than other participants, but nevertheless had a very strong affiliation with Mandarin, as was evidenced by her unwillingness to grant ownership of the language to anyone who had not learned it from childhood as she had, no matter how proficient they became. She expressed great appreciation for Mandarin, characterizing it as “very sophisticated,” and showed great concern throughout most of the study that her frequent use of English was negatively impacting her Mandarin abilities. In short, participants’ relationships with Mandarin Chinese varied, but for all of them, its impact on their identities was considerable, as would be expected for a dominant societal language.

In Southern Taiwan, Tai-yu is arguably a rather dominant language as well, but for Shannon, the only participant with 100% Mainlander ancestry, it was her lack of Tai-yu proficiency that distinguished her from most of her peers there. Although she claimed Tai-yu was not at all necessary for daily life, she admitted that she was affected by friends’ occasional good-natured teasing about her lack of Tai-yu ability. Stand-by participant Fiara, a close friend (and frequent classroom competitor) of Shannon’s, acknowledged this teasing and also

informed me that Shannon had, in fact, gained some Tai-yu proficiency while living in Kaohsiung – more than the minimal amount of receptive competence she told me she had acquired. “She's trying to learn. I can say that she has improved,” Fiara told me. “Even though when she speaks Tai-yu, we will laugh at her. Her pronunciation is very strange. It makes us laugh.”

For Gigi, Audrey, and Rachel, Tai-yu was closely associated with their Taiwanese identity, and Gigi and Audrey both declared it their “mother tongue.” Despite their strong affiliations with Tai-yu, their use of it was generally restricted to specific situations – joking, cursing, and for interactions with (usually elderly) family members, who they tended to see irregularly. Since they did regard Tai-yu as an integral component of their Taiwanese identities, Audrey and Rachel both expressed feelings of guilt about their inability to fully express themselves in Tai-yu. For Audrey, the guilt she felt, however, was not sufficient to prompt her to seek further opportunities to use the language during the course of the study. Rachel did report using Tai-yu in business interactions, so in addition to providing her with the increased practice she desired, these successful Tai-yu interactions likely impacted her identity as a competent sales representative for her company.

Opportunities to use French in Taiwan are, of course, far fewer than either Tai-yu or English. Participants’ identities were nevertheless impacted, in varying degrees, by their French abilities. With intensive and prolonged participation in various French speaking communities, both in France and Taiwan, Rachel’s identity was, without a doubt, affected most deeply. And despite the battles she constantly waged against French attrition, several factors allowed her to maintain

a robust affiliation with French: her investment in the imagined community of French speakers in which she envisioned herself participating in the future, the sense of superiority she felt viewing her French abilities as “better than others” in Taiwan, and her successful use of French in particular contexts, such as business meetings at her former place of employment where she worked alongside numerous French co-workers. The fact that Rachel was able to successfully participate in these French business meetings – to meet “the competencies expected and attributed by participants in the given environment” (Blommaert *et al.*, 2005, p. 200) – could in fact have played a large part in allowing her to feel that she could actually claim ownership in the French language.

Although nowhere near as much as with Rachel, French abilities did indeed impact the identities of other participants as well. Audrey reported being “obsessed with” the language during the three years she studied it at Saint Agnes, and did participate in a few French-speaking Discourse communities – first French and Belgian exchange students at Saint Agnes, and later with French speakers in her community of foreign friends. Audrey also began giving private French tutorials towards the end of the study, which positioned her as a French expert, and intended to become a French major upon her return to Saint Agnes after a year of working.

Since possession of French abilities is considered a valued asset (unlike Cantonese) and is also quite rare in Taiwan, the proficiency that participants had gained from three years of Saint Agnes French classes afforded them considerable prestige in Taiwanese society. Although opportunities to display and receive

recognition of their French abilities are, in Taiwan, rather scant, participants nevertheless did so on Facebook, where occasional status postings and communication with classmates in French allowed them to showcase their abilities and project their multilingual identities to everyone on their Facebook friend listings. Again, we see the significance of distinguishing oneself from others who lack comparable linguistic abilities. As Audrey commented, “I guess my French is usually for the function of surprising people ‘cuz not many people in Taiwan speak French...I guess it’s just to make myself different.” For all participants, including Shannon at the end of the study, French abilities were also viewed as a practical asset that would provide them with additional employment opportunities in a competitive job market where they feared their English abilities might fail to adequately distinguish them from other applicants.

Like Rachel, Gigi had traveled to France and had participated in French-speaking communities, both in France and on the internet. Had she not met Amedeo, traveled to Italy, and developed an intense passion for Italian, she may well have cultivated an affiliation with French comparable to that of Rachel. Her interest in French, however, was set aside as her investment in Italian and Discourse communities of Italian speakers intensified. These communities consisted of Amedeo’s friends and family, as well as the imagined community of Italian speakers she envisioned herself interacting with when she eventually moves to Italy to live and work. Although she continued to have a very positive view of French and thought it likely that she would use the language in the future, the main significance of French in Gigi’s life throughout the course of this study

was the fact that her knowledge of French, since it was a Latin-based language, facilitated her acquisition of Italian.

10.2 Research Question 2

To what extent are participants orienting toward membership in an imagined global community of English users (as opposed to associating English with speakers in traditionally English-speaking Western countries)?

As stated previously in the *English-Speaking Community Investment* section, all four focal participants did envision themselves as members of an imagined global community of English users. How they prioritized their associations with English – as a global language or a language of speakers in the traditionally English speaking countries of the U.S., U.K., Canada, Australia, and New Zealand – was largely dependent on what communities they happened to have had opportunities to participate and invest in. In other words, it was mostly just chance and circumstance that determined whether participants associated English more strongly with an imagined global community of English users or with ‘native speakers’ and their cultures. And these associations were subject to constant revision as participants’ investments in different communities fluctuated. It was just a chance occurrence, for example, that Rachel met and became romantically involved with her French boyfriend, with whom she used English to communicate, and although the Discourse community of his foreign friends in Taiwan that he introduced her to did include some Americans and Canadians, English, for Rachel, continued to be free of associations with any particular culture since these ‘native

speakers' comprised just a small portion of the community she participated in and were not a sub-community that she saw fit to focus any specific investment. It was only after she moved to Taipei that, as a result of her participation and investment in a new Discourse community of friends from Los Angeles, she began to associate English with Americans and American culture. The fact that she still remained adamant that English belonged to the world, even after shifting the priority of her English associations, should not necessarily be seen as contradictory, but instead simply as her negotiation of a nexus of multimembership (Wenger, 1998). When Rachel met her American friends and commenced investment in their community, she did not cease participation in other communities where English was used with non-Americans. She continued, for example, to invest in her workplace CoP, where she used English with all clients who did not speak Chinese. As Wenger (1998) points out, "In a nexus, multiple trajectories become part of each other, whether they clash or reinforce each other. They are, at the same time, one and multiple" (p. 159).

For Audrey too, the multiple communities in which she participated required her to negotiate a nexus of multimembership. The community she had immersed herself in and invested in most heavily was dominated by Canadians, and she viewed her boyfriend, also a member of this community, as British (because of his ancestry) despite his South African citizenship. It is, therefore, not surprising that she associated English strongly with the people and cultures of North America and England. Audrey did, however, frequently use English to communicate with individuals who were not from these traditionally English-

speaking countries, such as her Guatemalan roommate and customers from places like Czech and Norway who patronized the nightclubs she worked at. She claimed that when she spoke with such individuals, she did view English as an international language, with her and her interlocutors communicating as members of a global community of English users. Membership in this community for Audrey though did not imply ownership of English for her or her 'non-native' conversation partners. Audrey's imagined global community of English users was one where English was very much a borrowed language for anyone not born and raised in a traditionally English-speaking country. This attitude, I believe, was largely due to the large amount of time spent and investment expended in the community that included her South African/British boyfriend and a large number of Canadians. Audrey's entry into this community had been pure happenstance – a result of her being hired by the nightclub frequented by many of its members. Had she found herself investing as heavily in an alternate English-speaking community in which she wasn't always conscious of her fellow members' inheritance relationship with the language, her associations with English could very well have been very different.

Gigi's narratives showcase several such alternate communities comprised entirely of English users not born and raised in traditionally English-speaking countries. And since these were the sorts of communities that Gigi primarily invested in, her associations with English were of a decidedly global orientation. In the Saint Agnes English Debate Society, where she communicated in English with fellow community members who were, in fact, Taiwanese, and her

participation in various Discourse communities of foreign friends from Czech, Switzerland, France, and Italy, ‘native speakers’ of English were not to be found. This was not by design. Gigi did not deliberately set out to befriend only continental Europeans and avoid contact with speakers from traditionally English speaking countries. It was, again, just a series of chance occurrences that allowed her to meet Nathalie and Evelína on the Saint Agnes campus and Amedeo on Skype. Commenting on her lack of experience interacting with ‘native speakers’ of English, Gigi told me, “...it didn’t happen many occasions in my life at which I could meet or to be acquainted with them.” As a result of this circumstantial lack of participation in communities that included such individuals and her heavy investment in alternate communities, English, for Gigi, remained relatively free of cultural associations and instead simply, as she put it, “a door to the world.”

Contrasting sharply with Gigi’s global English associations, but also highlighting the potential for orientation shift, is Shannon’s story, in which English, for most of her life, was associated strongly with the United States. These associations were not only nurtured by Disney cartoons and her English mentor, the teacher who had previously enjoyed an extravagant lifestyle in the U.S. and captivated Shannon with stories of this experience, but also by her participation in an English-speaking community of family members – cousins who were born and raised in southern California. In explaining her sense of English ownership, Shannon equated herself with these California cousins, telling me that just like American-born Chinese, she had two languages – Chinese and English. Noticeably absent here, was Audrey’s ownership requirement of

learning a language from infancy. For Shannon, the fact that she had not grown up speaking the language in America, as her cousins had, was irrelevant. Her online and face-to-face communication exclusively in English with her cousins, who were both ethnically Chinese like her and from the same family, not only reinforced her American associations with English, but also allowed her to view herself as a legitimate member of an American Discourse community. Even as she participated regularly in online Discourse communities with non-American interlocutors like her Spanish internet friend, her principal focus of investment continued to steadfastly be American communities, both non-imagined ones including her cousins and imagined ones she envisioned for her future, and the associations she had with the English language were therefore decidedly American. Although this American orientation to English seemed rock solid and completely unshakeable, Shannon's experience using English to communicate with large numbers of fellow delegates from many different countries at the World Model U.N. conference nevertheless had a deep impact on her view of English in the world. She characterized her week at this conference as "the real experience of how important the language is," and, for the duration of the conference anyway, her sense of belonging to an imagined global community of English users was so strong that she insisted on speaking English even with the Taiwanese Saint Agnes classmates attending the conference with her. After the conference was over and the thrill of large-scale international communication had subsided, Shannon returned to her former orientation of predominantly associating English with Americans and American culture. Her experience at the

World Model U.N. conference and possible future English-speaking community participation in France, however, will likely necessitate her negotiation of a nexus of multimembership similar to Rachel's that will enable her to retain her American associations with English while simultaneously embracing her membership in an imagined global community of English users.

Shannon was the only one of the four participants whose story did not at some point involve a boyfriend with whom English was spoken, and the impact of these relationships on attitudes and investments for Gigi, Audrey, and Rachel was truly substantial. These intimate relationships, in fact, probably had more impact on the associations they made with English than any other community involvement. Although Rachel did not regard either of her two American friends as a boyfriend, she was obviously quite close to both of them, and it was her relationship with these two Americans that prompted her to start associating English with Americans and American culture. Prior to meeting these two Americans, the individual with whom she interacted most in English was her French boyfriend, and at that time, she didn't strongly associate English with any particular culture – just like Gigi, whose main English conversation partner was her Italian boyfriend. Similarly, Audrey's relationship with an Anglophone South African (who she saw as British) no doubt strengthened her already robust British and North American orientation toward English.

It is, of course, quite possible that, for some participants, a fascination with the West could have at least subconsciously impacted their love lives in a manner

similar to Pillar & Takahashi's (2006) study participants⁵⁹. Gigi, Audrey, and Rachel all mentioned having romantic images of France and French culture prior to enrolling at Saint Agnes, and Gigi was nursing a budding obsession with Italian culture before she met Amadeo online. Rachel also mentioned that before she met her French boyfriend, she liked "foreign stuff...American movies, French stuff" and felt "Taiwan – not good. Taiwan – small island." All these participants did, of course, embrace the opportunities for increased English use that their relationships with foreigners brought them, but since I never discussed the issue in any of my conversations with participants, I am reluctant to speculate much on the extent that desire to practice English or fascination with the West affected their choice of boyfriends. This topic could well result in a separate research article, but only after I have had further discussions with participants on the issue and conducted research on Taiwanese discourses romanticizing the West and relationships with Westerners⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Pillar & Takahashi (2006) examine the various ways in which the lives, and particularly the intimate relationships, of five Japanese women living in Australia are impacted by *akogare*, a Japanese term they describe as "a bundle of desires – for a 'Western' emancipated life-style, for a 'Western' prince charming and ladies' man, for mastery of English – all of which entail and inflect each other" (p. 78). Pillar & Takahashi's participants report adolescent obsessions with the West and Hollywood stars like Tom Cruise. As young girls, these obsessions fueled their desire to learn English and ultimately led them years later (in some cases, many years later) to study English in Australia, where they sought Caucasian 'native English speaker' boyfriends.

⁶⁰ Taiwanese discourses *discouraging* relationships with foreigners would also need to be considered in any such article. It should be noted, however, that all three of the relationships with foreigners discussed in this study had the blessings of the participants' families.

10.3 Research Question 3

To what extent do observed qualities associated with the entrepreneurial self appear to affect participants' success during their first year after graduation?

In general, the entrepreneurial self qualities of self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks to achieve goals did indeed appear to have impacted participants' lives throughout the course of the study. Since participants had different goals, however, and 'success' entailed different things for each of them, responding to this question requires that we examine each participant's achievements individually, identifying instances where each of them displayed entrepreneurial self qualities and reaped rewards as a result.

For Rachel, success at this point in her life meant acquiring employment in the business world that would enable her to earn a reasonably high salary and obtain valuable business experience, and the impact of entrepreneurial self qualities on her achievement of these goals has, of course, been tremendous. An extremely outgoing person who possesses all three of the previously mentioned entrepreneurial self qualities in abundance, Rachel reported aggressively promoting herself and her abilities in job interviews, and this risk paid off handsomely, with all seven of the companies she interviewed with offering her employment. Aside from this aggressive promotion, which obviously appealed to employers, Rachel's relentless desire to continuously push and improve herself no doubt distinguished her once she began working. Dissatisfaction due to an amorous boss and low wages at the first two jobs she landed prompted her to take on the free agent attitude valorized in enterprise culture, quickly obtaining a job

that not only paid quite well, but also allowed her a great deal of autonomy.

Without a doubt, Rachel's display of entrepreneurial self qualities has reaped copious rewards for her throughout the course of this study.

Unlike Rachel, Audrey did not have career-building aspirations during this study. For the year she spent out of school after graduation from the Saint Agnes five-year program, it was the short-term goals of achieving independence and maintaining a vibrant social life that constituted success for her. She was indeed successful in these endeavors, due in no small part to her self-reliance, boldness, and willingness to take risks – all qualities that she routinely displayed, by both my estimation and her own self-evaluation. In pursuit of the employment that enabled her to achieve financial independence from her mother, Audrey, like Rachel, reported promoting herself and her abilities in job interviews. Since her interviewers were American and Taiwanese-Canadian, doing so was certainly not as much of a risk as it would have been with a Taiwanese interviewer who could potentially value modesty over boldness, but after landing employment, Audrey continued to display the same entrepreneurial self qualities in her performance as a cram school teacher, defying traditional Taiwanese classroom norms in order to deliver the sort of English instruction she deemed most appropriate. Eventually, she was, of course, forced to compromise a bit and use more Chinese in her classes, but her manner of compromising – continuing to instruct in English, but with subsequent Chinese translations – was also a rather bold and defiant practice. It proved to satisfy her students and superiors alike though, so success could be said to have been achieved there. Success could also be said to have been

achieved in her social life, for Audrey was indeed quite popular in the predominantly foreigner populated community in which she invested heavily. Contributing to this popularity no doubt was her boldness and willingness to occasionally step out of her comfort zone with practices like performing in English comedy shows, even though she still refused offers to do improvisational comedy.

Although Gigi did not display entrepreneurial self qualities to anywhere near the degree that Rachel or Audrey did and was, by her own admission, quite shy, instances of risk-taking to achieve goals can certainly be identified in her narratives. Since her goal was to eventually have a career as a designer – ideally in Italy, success for Gigi during the course of this study entailed obtaining admission to a university design program and increasing her Italian proficiency. In pursuit of these goals, she took the entrance examination for admission into only one design program – a move that she herself thought of as rather risky since competition was fierce and she had little design experience. Her lone back-up plan, taking the entrance exam to enter the Italian department at another university, could be seen as a risky move as well since she had never had any formal Italian instruction – only self-study. Her risks paid off, however, and she was offered admittance to both programs. This success can, of course, largely be attributed to the excellent scores she achieved on the English portions of both exams, but for her to even attempt gaining admission to these programs without any additional back-up plan could be characterized as either a bold and risky move or simply foolhardy.

Success for Shannon, throughout the course of the study, came to be defined as developing skills that would distinguish her from others and enable her to be more marketable in an increasingly competitive job market. Despite her self-rating of zero for ‘boldness’ on the written questionnaire (which she later attributed to a temporary loss of confidence brought on by entrance examinations), Shannon, I believe, is actually an extremely bold risk-taker, for the decision to apply for and accept an exchange student position in France was, for her, a supremely risky move. For Shannon, doing so was not merely stepping out of her comfort zone, but instead actually committing herself to a potential full year of discomfort, for her experience studying French at Saint Agnes had been a truly miserable one. Even as she accepted the exchange student offer, she continued to regard the French language despairingly, and in our interview, kept reiterating the irony of her decision, as if she herself found it hard to believe that she was actually going through with this plan⁶¹. This decision to study in France in order to eventually make herself more marketable and flexible was, without a doubt, a bold and risky move for Shannon, and one that must have taken a tremendous amount of courage.

One Saint Agnes faculty member I interviewed felt that the college itself was largely responsible for instilling entrepreneurial self qualities in students – particularly the female students. “We have a lot of female students here at Saint Agnes compared to other universities, and it’s a little bit different since we are in this environment,” she told me. “There are more female teachers here... We are good examples for them.” This teacher, who was herself a Saint Agnes graduate, went on to explain that at Saint Agnes, female students have “a lot of chances to

⁶¹ And she did go through with this plan. Shannon, as I write this, is now in France.

stand up and stand out – to present themselves.” And from the four focal participants’ stories told here, this would indeed appear to be the case.

10.4 Research Question 4

To what extent do participants' orientations toward English and the future imagined communities they envision for themselves correspond to the orientations and imagined communities that teachers and curriculum developers at Saint Agnes envision for them?

As was previously discussed, participants’ orientations toward English varied. Gigi viewed the language as a global one relatively free of any specific cultural associations, while each of the other three participants, throughout the course of the study, found themselves carrying out ongoing negotiations at a nexus of multimembership, prioritizing and, in Rachel’s case, re-prioritizing English associations – with the people and cultures of traditionally English speaking countries and with an imagined global community of English users. How aware were Saint Agnes teachers and curriculum developers of the variation and fluidity observed here in the English orientations of just these four participants? And given this variation and fluidity, could it be at all possible for them to approach English language instruction in a manner that would appeal to all students? From my conversations with several Taiwanese Saint Agnes teachers – some who had taught E39A students and others who had had a hand in some aspect of curriculum development, my impression is that they were, in fact, generally quite

in tune with the English orientations of Saint Agnes students and were making commendable attempts to strike a balance between the two orientations.

All the Saint Agnes faculty members I spoke with believed that the majority of the school's students did strongly associate English with the U.S. and the U.K., and stressed that, like Shannon, most regarded American and British accents as most desirable. They also noted, however, that students were acutely aware of the potential of English for communication with people from all over the world, and some mentioned that they did have a few students who, like Gigi, primarily associated English with an imagined global community of English users. The following are a few representative comments by these faculty members:

I think personally, when they think of English, they will think of those traditionally – you know, the countries – the English speaking countries – England, Canada, America, Australia, New Zealand. They don't think of it as international English... Now of course they know that it's the primary international language that most – that almost all the people in the world use – when different people of different countries want to communicate.

I think they are more open... they won't think, "Okay, English only belongs to U.K. or U.S." but still, they will say they want to speak English so nicely like a native speaker.

There are some students who will say, "Oh, I'd like to have U.K. accent – British accent", or some people, they'd like to have American accent. They hardly say, "I want to have, you know, – I want to learn Singlish," right – or other countries' English accents...Some students, they do say, "Okay, if I learn English well, I can speak to different people from different countries" – yeah, like maybe in the future, they are going to have a job in Japan and maybe they can use English to communicate – yeah. So they have the idea.

All the faculty members I talked to acknowledged the fact that the majority of English language instructional materials used at Saint Agnes were still imported from the U.S. or the U.K. and had a decidedly American or British focus. Many reported, however, that they frequently attempted to counter the American and Anglo-centric discourse of textbooks by reminding students of the fact that English is used worldwide, and being able to only comprehend standard American and British English is insufficient, given the huge array of Englishes they are likely to encounter. As one teacher/curriculum developer explained:

In my teaching, I will tell them, "English is international language. You cannot just say you want to learn the standard English." I will try to pass this message to students. Okay, you cannot just expect to understand standard English. You have to understand the people who are from Japan, from India, or from New Zealand, Australia. You have to understand them – because you use the English to communicate each other. So in my teaching, I will try to give my students this kind of message.

Another teacher echoed these same sentiments, telling me:

When the students graduate and they go to work or they go abroad, they don't just talk to those native speakers. So they have to prepare themselves for this encounter with people from other different countries, and then I think it's what the school is for. The school prepares students for what they are going to encounter in the future, and that's what they're going to have, so that's what we – or teachers at the school – have to do. And I think, yeah – they cannot just learn the English spoken by native speakers.

While acknowledging students' strong tendency to have an American or British orientation toward English, the faculty of the Saint Agnes English department were clearly committed to fostering in students a more international orientation – one in which English was depicted as a tool for interacting with and gaining a better understanding of a wide variety of people and cultures. And this included Taiwanese culture, for two of the teacher/curriculum developers I interviewed had, in fact, recently published their own textbook in which a content-based approach was utilized, combining English language instruction with content knowledge of Taiwan's culture, history, ecology, and geography. This text, which was used in an elective course entitled *Introduction to Taiwanese Culture*, includes some authentic source materials, such as a Taiwan disembarkation card and, in the CD supplement, English announcements from the Taiwan High Speed Rail trains. One of its authors stressed to me that, when editing the book, great pains were

taken to emphasize the Taiwanese content of the book and avoid extensive use of idiomatic language typical of ‘native speaker’ English usage. As he explained:

In our textbook, of course we would like to use 'correct' English, but maybe not very very standardized English or the kind of idioms or phrases that English people – English speaking people would likely use. But I would say the language that we put in our textbook would be very very useful for them to introduce themselves or introduce the Taiwanese culture to the foreigners.

He went on to extol the virtues of content-based instruction, telling me, “With more ideas like this, I guess the students would be able to find more confidence in using the language as a media instead of considering the language as some kind of academic discipline that they should acquire from school.” This teacher/curriculum developer also told me that he was encouraging a faculty member from Poland to develop a content-based course introducing Poland and Polish culture to students in English. The department’s willingness to offer such a course shows its willingness to decouple English from associations with ‘native speaker’ cultures, and the fact that this Polish faculty member was hired in the first place indicates that, in its hiring practices as well, the Saint Agnes English department, in contrast to the many Taiwanese educational institutions that advertise teaching positions only open to ‘native speakers,’ values expertise over inheritance.

As for the correspondence between the imagined communities participants envisioned for themselves and the ones Saint Agnes faculty members imagined

for them, I also got the impression that these two visions were in relative alignment. All four focal participants envisioned themselves, in the distant future, living, working, and studying abroad – Shannon and Audrey in the U.S., Gigi in Italy, and Rachel in France. The faculty members I spoke to were all well aware that a large percentage of their students had such aspirations – to either move to foreign countries permanently or for a limited time, just to study. As one teacher/curriculum developer told me:

I know some students, they really admire the American culture. Some of the students really admire British culture. Okay, so that's the reason they want to study English or even they may think about immigrating – okay, settle down there...I cannot give you the exact number, but I think a lot of students, they want to go overseas – go abroad – either to study or take a look about what foreign countries are like, alright. But I think eventually maybe half – half of students will stay in Taiwan.

The fact that all the teachers and curriculum developers I talked to had themselves gone abroad for graduate study before returning to Taiwan, as was the standard experience for Taiwanese faculty members in the Saint Agnes English department, no doubt helped them to identify imagined communities abroad that their students envisioned. Two of the faculty members I interviewed had, in fact, graduated from the Saint Agnes five-year junior college program themselves, so having this shared background with their students arguably allowed them additional insight into students' dreams and aspirations.

Another factor that surely contributed to faculty members' understanding of the future imagined communities students were investing in is the fact that the college made efforts to track alumni to find out where and how they ended up utilizing the skills they acquired at Saint Agnes, and get valuable feedback from them to aid in the curriculum revision process. As one teacher/curriculum developer told me:

The curriculum committee in every department, they are required to get some feedback from the alumni. And they even invite the alumni to be a guest in the committee – to talk to them, to get information directly...
So we learn something. We learn something from their feedback.

This faculty member went on to reveal that, by keeping in touch with Saint Agnes graduates, he has been able to confirm that, while many do stay in Taiwan, a sizeable number do, in fact, realize their dreams of living and working abroad. As he explained:

So I know a lot of my students who are working, not in Taiwan, but they're working in the other countries like Singapore or like Hong Kong, Japan, or the other countries. And they were all expecting to have another job in another country, or they will be assigned by their company to work in some other countries.

Such knowledge of alumni whereabouts not only informed faculty members of what communities they were potentially preparing their students to interact in, but also served to remind them of the international futures that many students envisioned for themselves. As the same teacher/curriculum developer pointed out:

Our students have, generally speaking, a better world vision than the other students. They get more chances to contact the world with their language...I mean with this kind of language ability, I guess the vision of our students shouldn't be just limited in Taiwan.

Although all the faculty members I spoke with seemed quite aware of the range of imagined communities Saint Agnes students envisioned for their futures, some showed much less awareness of the non-imagined English speaking communities that their students were participating in – particularly online communities. When I mentioned my participants' Facebook and Skype interactions, for example, one teacher/curriculum developer replied, "That's the new trend, huh? Using the internet?" Perhaps this faculty member's lack of awareness regarding the impact of online communities on students' lives is due to students' reluctance to share this aspect of their lives with her, for she went on to tell me the following story:

My students, the 2nd year students, okay – just a few of them – say they want to go to New Zealand or Australia. I asked, "Why? Do you have any friend there?" or something like that. Um – actually they don't want to tell me the truth, but I got some information from her mom, okay. So I think she – they have some friends there by using the internet, so they have some net pals there. So they have some association. That's the reason they say they want to study over there or they want to take a trip there.

Other faculty members, however, did seem quite aware of their students' online activities. One teacher, for instance, informed me that some of her students

published their own blogs in English or the languages they studied as a minor – French or Spanish. She attributed this to students’ desire to restrict their readership to only their Saint Agnes classmates. “They want to say something about their, you know, their ideas or their wishes, and they don't want other people who are not Saint Agnes students to know,” she told me. “They just use French maybe, or use Spanish or use English.”

10.5 Implications of this Study

In the following three sections, I identify and discuss two implications of this study for applied linguistic theory, three implications for language pedagogy, and one for Taiwanese language policy.

10.5.1 Theoretical Implications

The first implication for theory that I will discuss concerns the English as a lingua franca (ELF) research paradigm, which emphasizes English use for communication among speakers who did not learn it as a native language. There are a range of ELF conceptualizations utilized by researchers working within the paradigm. In its ‘weaker’ versions (e.g., Kirkpatrick, 2007) ELF is basically synonymous with English as an international language (EIL), but in the ‘strong’ versions advocated by others (e.g., Seidlhofer, 2001), ELF is depicted as a distinct emerging variety of English that its users employ for practical purposes, and the impact of ELF abilities on the identities of these users tends to be downplayed⁶². House (2003), in fact, goes so far as to argue that since ELF use tends to be used

⁶² An exception is Jenkins (2007), which does prominently discuss identity and ELF use.

for utilitarian purposes, it has no impact on a speaker's identity. She explicates this assertion as follows:

Because ELF is not a national language, but a mere tool bereft of cultural collective capital, it is a language usable neither for identity marking, nor for a positive ('integrative') disposition toward an L2 group, nor for a desire to become similar to valued members of this L2 group – simply because there is no definable group of ELF speakers (p. 560).

This is clearly an invalid argument, for, as the narratives of participants in this study have illustrated, the ability to communicate with people one would otherwise not be able to communicate with and accomplish tasks that would otherwise be difficult or impossible cannot help but greatly affect a person's sense of self, regardless of whom one's interlocutors happen to be. Every instance of English discourse for participants was, after all, a site of identity construction, and each time Gigi, for example, used English to communicate with her Italian boyfriend Amedeo, her identity as a user of English was strengthened. When she employed her English skills to serve as an interpreter for her cousin, who lacked comparable skills, her identity as an English speaker was especially strengthened in reference to her comparatively helpless cousin. The language is, without a doubt, functioning as a useful tool in such circumstances, but just as a painter's brush, another mere tool, can have a profound impact on the painter's identity, so too can the linguistic tool that is the focus of discussion here. The fact that the imagined global community of English users is not definable and is, in fact, a rather fuzzy concept, furthermore does not detract from its potential to impact

ELF users' self-conceptualizations, for as Kanno & Norton (2003) point out, imagined communities are "no less real than the ones in which learners have daily engagement" (p. 242). In order for researchers working within the ELF paradigm to adequately represent the experience of the ELF users they claim to be advocating on behalf of, they must all stop downplaying and denying the impact that English abilities have on identity and instead give identity issues a prominent place in the ELF research agenda.

This study also has implications for theoretical models of English as a global language. According to Berns (2005), the characteristics that distinguish the expanding circle from the outer circle in Kachru's (1985) influential concentric circle model include pattern of acquisition, status of English as a second or foreign language, sources of norms, and functional allocation. In Taiwan, the fact that early childhood English shadow education is increasingly the norm and public elementary school English education is now mandatory serve to make the pattern of acquisition more resemble that of outer circle countries. The necessity of having some English proficiency for university admittance and for securing employment (even for jobs that actually involve little or no actual English use) also make English, in effect, more of a second than a foreign language. It is the functional allocation of English in Taiwanese society though – the domains in which the language is used – that I shall focus on in this discussion, for some of the domains in which this study's participants used English are certainly not traditionally associated with expanding circle contexts. English use in expanding circle countries is generally believed to be strictly utilitarian in nature and

restricted to very specific professional domains like international business and tourism. Noting that her German study participants, like mine in Taiwan, used English in a wide range of domains, Erling (2004) proposes a typology of English domains that she deems more applicable to today's globalized world than previous ones put forth by Halliday (1973) and Kachru (1982). In addition to educational, personal, professional, and bureaucratic domains, Erling includes in this typology media and entertainment domains, advertising domains, creative domains, and identity domains. Referring to these four collectively as "domains of expression," she states, "These are domains in which English use is being increasingly accommodated to suit localized needs and to express involvement in the international community" (p. 220).

This study's participants did use English extensively in educational, personal, and professional domains. They also used English creatively in research papers and other assignments at Saint Agnes, and for Audrey, English creativity provided an enjoyable pastime with her poetic freewriting and work with the comedy troupe community of practice. All participants embraced English media and entertainment, regularly consuming English novels, magazines, TV shows, movies, and websites. They were all certainly exposed to plenty of English advertising as well, and Audrey, in her nightclub PR jobs, actually engaged in English advertising herself. Participants' English use in identity domains, as has been well established here, was, of course, also extensive.

The range and depth of the domains in which this study's participants used English clearly surpasses the restricted usage for specific utilitarian functions

traditionally associated with expanding circle countries like Taiwan. This study now joins a growing number of others, such as Erling's study in the German context, that call attention to the fact that the distinctions that made Kachru's (1985) concentric circle model and corresponding ESL/EFL designations valid in the 1980's are blurring. The situation of English in the world is, without a doubt, not as simple as it once was, and in order to more accurately reflect multiple fluid identities and increasing use of English in domains previously reserved for local languages in contexts like Taiwan, new models to characterize English use in today's world are definitely needed. As Crystal (2001) asserts, "Our nice models of World English – for example, in terms of concentric circles – will need some radical overhaul" (p. 15).

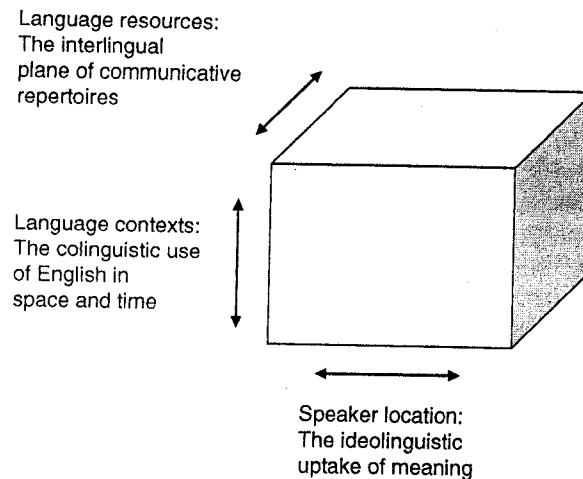
In recent years, several overhauls to the concentric circle model have been proposed – some more radical than others. Yano (2009), for example, presents a cylindrical model with a vertical axis depicting English proficiency level, but still includes in this model each of the three Kachruvian circles, with the inner circle highest on the proficiency axis and the expanding circle at the bottom. Expanding circle English users, Yano maintains, must first reach the proficiency level of a typical inner circle English user before surpassing this level to potentially achieve EIL proficiency at the top of the cylinder. Yano (2009) describes EIL as "the ultimate level of proficiency for cross-regional or international communication" (p. 216), and characterizes this model as a transitional one. The circles, he states, could eventually be removed if English users are one day judged solely on the basis of proficiency rather than place of origin.

While Yano's (2009) model is commendable for not restricting English users to their circles and allowing them to ascend up the expertise axis, his refusal to totally eschew region-based categorization still renders this model reductionist and inadequate for representing the particular English practices of participants of this study and others like Erling's. As Bruthiaux (2003) suggests, an alternative model for the 21st century "should make it possible to represent speech practices based on patterns of interaction and communicative, not historical, factors and take as its premise the notion that shared linguistic knowledge and practices are generally of greater communicative consequence than national origin" (p. 175).

Just such a model has, in fact, recently been proposed. Arguing that the kind of variety represented by Yano's vertical proficiency axis should be understood in terms of contextual language use, Pennycook (2009) introduces a three-dimensional model in which national boundaries play no role. Signifying that all English use is interconnected and that users draw from a wide variety of linguistic resources, the top plane of Pennycook's model instead represents all the varieties of English out there in the world. The vertical plane represents the specific contexts of interactions – who is speaking, to whom, in what particular time and space. And the third plane of Pennycook's model represents what he calls *the ideolinguistic dimension* – the language histories, ideologies, and investments of individual English users that influence their interpretations in interactions. Pennycook (2009) asserts that "We need to escape from the circles, tubes and boxes based on nations that have so bedevilled world Englishes and linguistics

more generally” (p. 204), and he has done just that, creating a model capable of accommodating any of the English interactions of this study’s participants.

Figure 10.1: Pennycook’s 3D Transtextual Model of English Use



(from Pennycook, 2009, p. 204)

Complementing Pennycook’s 3D model is the call by Blommaert *et al.* (2005) to rethink multilingualism in terms of space and scale. Just as Pennycook’s model recognizes that specific contexts exert an enormous influence on communicative interaction, Blommaert *et al.* are similarly concerned with the specific contexts of multilingual interaction, and how these contexts position interactants. This perspective, I believe, is valid for all multilingual situations, including the ones discussed in this study’s participant narratives. The languages in participants’ linguistic repertoires, for example, were subject to different scalar rankings in the various spaces in Taiwan that they found themselves interacting in. In a few spaces, such as some in Gigi’s rural hometown, Tai-yu ranked highly and its use met with approval. In the vast majority of Taiwanese spaces that participants

communicated in, however, Tai-yu ranked quite low on the evaluative scale relative to Mandarin Chinese and English. Participants consequently did not feel the need to exert great efforts to maintain and enhance their Tai-yu abilities. English, in contrast, was a valued linguistic resource that enjoyed high scalar rankings in almost all the spaces participants inhabited. Their English abilities thus brought them admiration and resulted in their being positioned as experts. The fact that their spoken English was generally not flawless by ‘native speaker’ standards was largely irrelevant, for it was the conditions of particular spaces that dictated interlocutors’ judgments. On a scalar ranking, their English skills were vastly superior to most others in Taiwanese spaces, and this was the yardstick against which their abilities were assessed. Participants were very fortunate that this was the case even in the communicative spaces they shared with ‘native speakers’ of English. In such situations, it seemed that their ‘native speaker’ interlocutors, no doubt grateful to be able to converse in English at all, positioned them as equals in English interactions, enabling rather than constraining deployment of their English abilities. This might not have been the case if they had been interacting with some of the same interlocutors in a different space – Canada, for instance. As Blommaert *et al.* (2005) note, “space *does something* to people” (p. 203, italics in original). In short, I believe that, based on its applicability to the experiences of participants in this study, viewing multilingualism in terms of space and scale has great potential for providing valuable insights into the specific conditions that promote and constrain multilingualism in particular environments.

10.5.2 Pedagogical Implications

First and foremost, I hope that the biggest message teachers and curriculum developers take away after reading this dissertation is the importance of really getting to know their students, for it is only through doing so that language instruction can be made relevant to their lives, appealing to their dreams and desires – their sense of who they are and the individuals they hope to become. Of course it is highly unlikely that any teacher would be able delve into students' lives to the extent that I have with the four focal participants of this study, and if one is attempting to obtain knowledge about students' lived experiences in Taiwan, where class sizes of fifty students is the norm, gaining even a fraction of the information I have presented here would indeed be a monumental undertaking. Even in such situations, however, there are classroom practices teachers can employ to help them get a general sense of students' interests, community participation, and investment in imagined communities. Written or oral presentation assignments in which students are asked to discuss their past, present, and future lives, for example, can potentially provide teachers with much valuable information that could help inform their teaching practices. Assignments that ask students to reflect on and discuss the place of English in their lives, and more generally, in their society, could not only inform teachers about their students' orientations toward English, but also potentially allow students themselves greater insights on their own experience. Even those with little or no English speaking community participation outside the classroom may be surprised at the extent to

which English is interwoven into the fabric of their societies. Fabrício & Santos (2006), for example, discuss a college English course in Brazil in which students were assigned to identify English use in their environment, such as in media texts and on the clothing they wore, and subsequently analyze the different types of English they had identified. Commenting on this student analysis, Fabrício & Santos (2006) state, “What all of these texts have in common is that they represented English-in-the-new-global-order in ways particularly relevant to that local community of particular teachers and learners” (p. 75).

For students that do, in fact, have some participation in English-speaking communities, whether face-to-face or online, assignments asking them to reflect on and discuss these experiences could also help them to see themselves as legitimate users of English – a view that could ultimately, as was the case with Rachel and Shannon, lead them to have a sense of ownership in the language. Possible topics for assignments could be similar to questions that I asked participants in interviews: Can you tell me about a time when using English made you feel good? Can you tell me about a time when using English made you feel not so good? Students could then be encouraged to reflect on how the ways they were positioned by interlocutors affected their impressions of the events they identify. When discussing these issues, both in classroom discussion and consultation with individual students, it is also imperative, of course, that we, as teachers, also position our students as legitimate users of English in spite of the fact that they are obviously still learners in our classrooms seeking to improve their proficiency.

Another pedagogical implication of this study involves, once again, the English as a lingua franca (ELF) research paradigm. Proponents of the ‘strong’ version of ELF that conceptualize it as a distinct emerging variety, have, not surprisingly, met with criticism that they intend for their work in ELF description to result in new norms for language teaching, materials, and curriculum design. Although work in ELF description is still in its early stages, Seidlhofer (2004) identifies several common features from her ELF corpus data that would presumably be considered acceptable in a future ELF model – features that Seidlhofer (2004) says would traditionally be classified as errors, but “appear to be unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success” (p. 220). These include omission of the third person singular present tense *-s* (e.g., *She look sad.*) and interchangeable use of the pronouns *who* and *which* (e.g., *I want the book who is on the shelf.*). Critics argue that imposing such a model on learners would be doing them a great disservice. Prodromou (2008), for instance, asserts that “a reduced form of ELF does not condemn L2-users to voicelessness, but risks bringing them stuttering onto the world stage of ELF, i.e. with reduced linguistic capital” (p. 250). Attempting to deflect such criticism, Seidlhofer (2006) insists that she is merely doing the job of a descriptive linguist, and it is up to teachers and learners to decide in the future whether an ELF pedagogic model could be appropriate for their circumstances.

Without a doubt, there are a large number of English users in Taiwan and the rest of the world, who, like Gigi, engage in English interactions primarily with other L2 speakers and have a decidedly global orientation to English. Rachel’s

story illustrates, however, that community participation and resulting affiliations are constantly subject to change. At one point in English users' learning trajectories, they may feel that achieving basic understanding with a simplified ELF variety is all that is needed for their present communicative needs, but communicative needs change, both over the long-term and from moment to moment. As Prodromou (2008) points out:

An L2-L2 conversation can become an L2-L1 exchange from one moment to the next; it can evolve from shallow to deep commonality within the same speech event; a business deal can grow into friendship or marriage; ELF can go from 'big talk' to 'small talk' and vice versa (p. 248).

Few English users in the world today, I believe, find themselves using the language exclusively in a single domain, and merely making oneself understood will, sooner or later, be deemed insufficient for many. Even if one's community affiliations do not change drastically, the demands of projecting the multiple aspects of one's identity through language are ever-present. Upon reaching the point that she could easily make herself understood, Gigi, for example, found this inadequate, telling me, "When my English is capable to communicate, I become more cautious about what I speak because my language presents who I am."

Far more serviceable, I believe, for English learners' present and future needs than a syllabus based on some future ELF model, would be a pedagogy that emphasizes accommodation, clarification, repair, and negotiation strategies for communication with a wide variety of interlocutors in different situations. This

will also aid in fostering entrepreneurial self qualities that could help them achieve their future goals, for as they become increasingly adept at such strategies, they will gain much confidence in their communicative abilities. As Canagarajah (2007) reminds us, “LFE [lingua franca English] does not exist as a system out there. It is constantly brought into being in each context of communication” (p. 91). By focusing on “strategies and processes of language negotiation” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 210) while also familiarizing students with multiple accents through recordings now easily accessible on the internet, we can equip them with the skills to handle the many different challenges that will emerge in ELF communication.

In order to provide students with linguistic resources that will serve them well in multiple communities and appeal to the wide variety of orientations toward English that we are likely to encounter in teaching contexts outside of traditionally English speaking countries, I believe that a more or less ‘standard’ English should continue to be taught, but not necessarily one that totally embraces ‘native speaker’ norms. It is possible to present language to students that any prescriptive grammarian would deem correct, while attempting to avoid idiomatic language and lexical items specific to particular countries. The textbook focusing on Taiwanese culture that Saint Agnes faculty members authored is a perfect example of this and more materials of this sort need to be developed. Efforts can also be made to alleviate the challenges learners face without transmitting ELF features their interlocutors could perceive as errors. Instead of telling students that it is acceptable, for example, to use the invariant tag *isn't it?*, another

common ELF feature that Seidlhofer (2004) mentions, they could be taught to use *right?* as an invariant tag – a practice that would be considered grammatically correct and not detract from their linguistic capital in any community they might find themselves in. As students, in the classroom, gain proficiency in an English that is as culturally neutral as is reasonably possible and comprehensible in a wide variety of contexts, they are free to tinge this English with whatever flavors they deem appropriate for projecting their individual identities and orientations toward English. This tailoring of the language to suit their specific needs would mostly be done by students on their own outside the classroom – via the internet and in whatever communities they happen to be participating in. Our role as teachers is to encourage it and, as previously discussed, bring these out of class English experiences into the classroom, where they can be acknowledged, reflected on, and discussed.

One final pedagogical implication of this study involves instruction that aims to foster entrepreneurial self qualities and prepare students for enterprise culture workplaces. Rachel's experience seeking and obtaining employment indicates that Taiwanese employers could be abandoning their traditional preference for modesty and starting to reward bold self-promotion. Although many more experiences like Rachel's need to be documented before we can definitively say that such an attitudinal shift has occurred, the type of instruction advocated by Kramsch (2007) and Wee (2008) explicitly focusing on the interactional practices and qualities valued in enterprise culture would clearly benefit students at *some* workplaces in Taiwan's most cosmopolitan areas (Taipei, Taichung, and

Kaohsiung). Just as Gigi learned to boldly promote items in her marketing class presentations and subsequently claim that she felt she could promote herself and her own abilities in a similar fashion, students can be assigned classroom activities that allow them to exhibit qualities like initiative and motivation, and as they engage in such activities, gradually build up the confidence needed to present themselves as someone with these qualities.

10.5.3 Policy Implication

Although the 2002 National Development Plan called for English to be designated a “quasi-official language” for Taiwan, English has not been granted any official or “quasi-official” status. Since Tai-yu, Hakka, and the Aboriginal languages have yet to be officially recognized, it would, in fact, still be quite inappropriate to grant English official recognition without first doing so for these Taiwanese languages that are considered mother tongues by a significant portion of the population. There have been repeated attempts since 2002 to elevate Tai-yu, Hakka, and the Aboriginal languages to official or national language status alongside Mandarin Chinese, the latest of which, the National Language Development Law, has been pending since 2007 in the Legislative Assembly (Wu, 2011). After local languages are all granted official recognition⁶³, however, I believe that English should be added to what would then be a long list of official languages for Taiwan. To do so would simply be government acknowledgement of the important place the language does, in fact, have in Taiwanese society, and

⁶³ When and if this happens depends almost entirely on the DPP’s ability to gain more Legislative Assembly seats in upcoming elections. At the moment, the KMT controls the Legislative Assembly.

would actually have little impact on the lives of citizens except for the fact that it would provide additional justification for Taiwanese users of English to claim ownership in the language – for them to see it as one of their own languages instead of a borrowed one. To me, this alone is adequate reason to give English official status in Taiwan, for with ownership comes empowerment. When you are renting a house, you feel as though you must take great care to keep the property intact, for even miniscule thumb-tack holes in the walls might well incur the wrath of the landlord. Things are completely different though when you own the house, for ownership gives you the right to paint the house pink, build trap doors, or do any crazy thing you care to do with it. Similarly, with linguistic ownership, you have *carte blanche* to manipulate the language in whatever way you see fit to suit your own whims and purposes. As this study shows, English users can be quite strict with their criteria for ownership. Some like Audrey might never be able to claim English as their own simply because they view ownership as more linked to inheritance than expertise or affiliation. Designating English an official language might just make it possible for some Taiwanese with similar attitudes to rationalize more of an inheritance relationship with the language, enabling them to claim it as their property to do with as they please.

10.6 Suggestions for Further Research

With this study, I have sought to fill a gap in the existing literature on language learning in Taiwan, focusing not on teaching methods, which have, thus far, dominated Taiwanese applied linguistics scholarship, but on Taiwanese English

users' identity and how it is impacted by their linguistic abilities. In doing so, I have employed a narrative approach, prominently featuring participants' stories that detail the community affiliations of their past, present, and imagined future lives. Although this approach is still considered somewhat unconventional, I hope this will soon change because I firmly believe it is a particularly well-suited approach for examining identity. I therefore urge other identity investigators to employ this approach and look forward to reading more stories of English users in Taiwan and elsewhere. The experiences of my participants are by no means typical of Taiwanese English users. These participants represent an elite, but growing, minority of Taiwanese who are able to confidently express themselves in English, and were indeed chosen for participation in this study based on their potential to be at the forefront of the phenomenon that Warschauer (2000) describes in his prediction of L2 English speakers using "the language less as an object of foreign study and more as an additional language of their own to have an impact on and change the world" (p. 530). Additional English user narratives – both the typical and atypical – need to be presented in order for us to determine the extent to which Warschauer's prediction becomes a reality in the years to come.

Although I have occasionally included here bits of interactional data such as participants' Facebook postings, this study has relied almost entirely on data obtained from my recorded interviews and personal communication with participants. Future studies, I suggest, should complement participants' narratives with more such data from the actual community interactions from which their

identity emerges, showcasing not only participants' identity negotiation and projection in these interactions, but also the ways in which they are positioned by their interlocutors. The conceptualization of multilingualism as enabled and constrained by scale and space put forth by Blommaert *et al.* (2005) and Pennycook's (2009) 3D Transtextual Model of English Use could together provide a very useful theoretical lens for such investigations.

In addition to more studies like this one, looking at the various ways in which linguistic abilities impact identity, I also suggest further research focusing on several topics that were prominently featured here, such as English users' sense of membership in an imagined global community. As Ryan (2006) points out, "The challenge to articulate the imagined is indeed a daunting one, and is...only possible with the kind of qualitative data that can only be provided by actual learners in EFL contexts" (p. 42). The influence of entrepreneurial self qualities on the achievement of goals, particularly in East Asian contexts where modesty has traditionally been valued over bold self-promotion, is another area of inquiry that warrants further research. Chronicling the change in attitude that this study suggests is occurring in Taiwan could yield especially interesting findings if participants are, as they were in this study, proficient English users – those most subject to accusations of westernization. Finally, one additional topic that I strongly suggest be investigated more fully is English users' sense of ownership in the English language, for I completely concur with Norton (1997) when she says that "if English belongs to the people who speak it..., then the expansion of

English in this era of rapid globalization may possibly be for the better rather than for the worse” (p. 427).

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Appendix

E5A Questionnaire Survey

Invented Name: _____

Sex: _____ female _____ male

Age: _____ years

(1) Which category do you feel best describes your ethnicity?

- a. _____ Taiwanese
- b. _____ Chinese
- c. _____ Other (please specify): _____

(2a.) Where were you born (city and country)? _____

(2b.) Where were your parents born (city and country)?
mother _____
father _____

(3) Which child are you in your family?

_____ oldest _____ middle _____ youngest _____ only child

(4a.) **Mandarin Chinese** evaluation of expertise

Please rate your Mandarin Chinese level of expertise in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing) on a scale of 0 to 5 (with 0 being no proficiency, 1 being very minimal proficiency, and 5 being the highest level of expertise).

listening level _____ speaking level _____ reading level _____ writing level _____

(4b.) Approximately how old were you when you started to learn Mandarin Chinese? _____ years old

(4c.) Please list the groups of people you communicate with in Mandarin Chinese (both face-to-face communication and telephone or internet communication).

(4d.) Please comment on your experience learning Mandarin Chinese (in and/or out of school).

(4e.) How would you describe the role of Mandarin Chinese in your life now?

(5a.) **English** evaluation of expertise

Please rate your English level of expertise in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing) on a scale of 0 to 5 (with 0 being no proficiency, 1 being very minimal proficiency, and 5 being the highest level of expertise).

listening level ____ speaking level ____ reading level ____ writing level ____

(5b.) Approximately how old were you when you started to learn English?

_____ years old

(5c.) Please list the groups of people you communicate with in English (both face-to-face communication and telephone or internet communication).

(5d.) Please comment on your experience learning English (in and/or out of school).

(5e.) How would you describe the role of English in your life now?

(6a.) **French** evaluation of expertise

Please rate your French level of expertise in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing) on a scale of 0 to 5 (with 0 being no proficiency, 1 being very minimal proficiency, and 5 being the highest level of expertise).

listening level ____ speaking level ____ reading level ____ writing level ____

(6b.) Approximately how old were you when you started to learn French?

_____ years old

(6c.) Please list the groups of people you communicate with in French (both face-to-face communication and telephone or internet communication).

(6d.) Please comment on your experience learning French (in and/or out of school).

(6e.) How would you describe the role of French in your life now?

(7a.) **Additional language or dialect (please specify):** _____ evaluation of expertise

(If you do not know any additional languages or dialects, leave these questions blank.)

Please rate your level of expertise in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing) in this language on a scale of 0 to 5 (with 0 being no proficiency, 1 being very minimal proficiency, and 5 being the highest level of expertise).

listening level _____ speaking level _____ reading level _____ writing level _____

(7b.) Approximately how old were you when you started to learn this language?
_____ years old

(7c.) Please list the groups of people you communicate with in this language (both face-to-face communication and telephone or internet communication).

(7d.) Please comment on your experience learning this language (in and/or out of school).

(7e.) How would you describe the role of this language in your life now?

(8a.) **Additional language or dialect (please specify):** _____ evaluation of expertise

(If you do not know any additional languages or dialects, leave these questions blank.)

Please rate your level of expertise in each of the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, & writing) in this language on a scale of 0 to 5 (with 0 being no proficiency, 1 being very minimal proficiency, and 5 being the highest level of expertise).

listening level _____ speaking level _____ reading level _____ writing level _____

(8b.) Approximately how old were you when you started to learn this language?
_____ years old

(8c.) Please list the groups of people you communicate with in this language (both face-to-face communication and telephone or internet communication).

(8d.) Please comment on your experience learning this language (in and/or out of school).

(8e.) How would you describe the role of this language in your life now?

(9) If your future hypothetical children were in a situation where they were allowed to learn and speak only one language, what language would you want that to be? _____

Why? _____

(10) What are your plans for the near future after graduation? If you plan to work, what sort of job will you try to find? If you plan to continue with school, what do you plan to study?

(11) Now imagine yourself in the more far off future ten years from now. What languages are you using to communicate with what people or groups of people?

(12) Please rate on a scale of 0 to 5 the degree that you feel you possess the following qualities (with 0 being 'not at all' and 5 being 'very strong').
_____ self-reliant _____ bold _____ willing to take risks to achieve your goals

Thank you very much for taking this survey.

Are you interested in being a focal participant in my study?
Being a focal participant would involve one interview (lasting between an hour and an hour and a half) sometime between now and May 19th (Tuesday) at a time and place that is convenient for you. We would stay in touch via email, and then have another interview when I return to Taiwan in ten months (March 2010).

_____ Yes, I am interested in being a focal participant.

Name: _____

email: _____

phone: _____ best times to call: _____

Is it better for me to contact you by phone or email? _____

Times available for interview:
