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English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Learning and Capital in
Rural China:
A Case Study of a Group of Secondary School Students



Department of Language, Literature, and Social Science Education.

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Doctoral Thesis

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Abstract

Based on Bourdieu's capital theory and Norton's theory of investment as well as identity, this study examines to what extent English is perceived as a form of cultural capital by a group of students from rural China, how their social capital affects the extent to which English converts into cultural capital, and the effects of their identity changing across time and space on their investment in English. Setting out from the background of globalization in relation to the English language and a discussion of the development of English education in China, I examine the relationship between English language learning and capital in the context studied. The empirical part of the thesis involves interviews with ten participants who had learned English as a foreign language in a rural secondary school and at college in China, as well a focus group with some of these participants, drawing on their experience of learning English to provide an analysis of the conversion of the English language into cultural capital, its relevance to social mobility for the students, and the relationship between their identity and investment in English.

Through narrative inquiry, the results revealed: (a) when the participants were in school or college, they established relationships with English related to their perceived access to cultural, economic and social capital; (b) the participants' intersubjective positionings in regards to English changed across time and space to different degrees; (c) the changes in attitude concerning the possibilities of converting English to cultural capital must be understood within the scope of their social capital, along with the shift of their identities across time and space; (d) investment in English language learning processes by the participants is linked to presumed or tangible possible returns on the investment.

Key words: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), capital, identity, investment

Resumen

Partiendo de las teorías sobre el capital de Bourdieu, y las teorías sobre inversión e identidad de Norton, este estudio examina hasta que punto el inglés es percibido como una forma de capital cultural por un grupo de estudiantes de la China rural, como su capital social afecta el grado en que el inglés se convierte en capital cultural y la relación entre su identidad y su inversión en inglés. Partiendo de una discusión sobre la globalización en relación con el idioma inglés y sobre el desarrollo de la educación de inglés en China, se examina la relación entre el aprendizaje del inglés y el capital en el contexto estudiado. La parte empírica de la tesis incluye entrevistas con diez participantes que habían aprendido inglés como lengua extranjera en una escuela secundaria rural y en una universidad en China, y un grupo de discusión con algunos de estos aprendices, aprovechando su experiencia de aprender inglés. Se analiza como la lengua inglesa se convierte en capital cultural, su relevancia para la movilidad social de los estudiantes y la relación entre su identidad e inversión en inglés.

A través del estudio de narrativas, los resultados revelaron que: (a) cuando los participantes iban a la escuela o la universidad, establecieron relaciones con el inglés según el acceso percibido al capital cultural, económico y social; (b) los posicionamientos intersubjetivos de los participantes con respecto al inglés cambiaron a través del tiempo y el espacio en diferentes grados; (c) los cambios de actitud relativos a las posibilidades de convertir el inglés en capital cultural deben entenderse en relación con el capital social de los participantes, junto con el cambio de sus identidades a través del tiempo y el espacio; (d) la inversión en los procesos de aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa por parte de los participantes está vinculada a posibles retornos imaginados o tangibles sobre su inversión.

Palabras clave: Inglés como lengua extranjera, capital, identidad, inversión

摘要

基于对布迪厄的资本理论、诺顿的投资以及身份理论，本研究通过一组来自中国农村中学的学生探究了他们将英语视为文化资本形式的程度、他们的社会资本对此程度的影响，以及他们随时间和空间而变化的身份对他们在英语投资上的影响。基于英语全球化这个背景以及对于中国英语教育的发展情况的探讨，我主要研究英语学习与资本之间的关系。论文的实证研究部分主要通过对一组来自农村中学和中国大学的学生的访谈，研究他们把英语作为外语进行学习的经历。并且通过由其中部分参与者组成的焦点小组讨论，利用他们学习英语的经验来进行对话分析，探讨英语转化为文化资本的程度、与学生社会阶层流动性的关联，以及他们的身份与英语投资之间的关系。

通过叙事研究，本研究结果显示：（a）参与者在中学或大学期间，他们把英语与取得文化、经济和社会资本的方式建立了相应的关联；（b）参与者在英语学习方面的主体之间的定位随时间而发生不同程度的变化；（c）关于将英语转换为文化资本的可能性及其态度的变化，必须从他们的社会资本以及随着时间和空间上的转移而发生变化的身体上进行理解；（d）参与者们对英语学习过程的投资与他们设定的或实际的回报息息相关。

关键词： 以英语为外语的教学 资本 身份 投资

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Globalization of the English language is a worldwide phenomenon, and has influenced English education in many countries (Gil & Adamson, 2011). China is no exception. In China, strengthening English education has become an important part of educational reform, and plays a crucial role in the governmental strategic plan for national economic development (Gao, 2012a; Qiang, Huang, Siegel & Trube, 2011). The administrative promotion of English learning was originally conceived as a transparent window to ‘western’ technical knowledge, however, English in China today has been inextricably considered as motive power in the development of the country’s ‘narrative of self-identity.’ This shift has influenced English education both informally and institutionally. Recently, the Chinese state has moved to institutionalize and formalize this influence, the use English, is promoted as a kind of ‘soft power’ to access the world.

During this process, English teachers and learners in China are unavoidably connected as agents as well as observers of historically unprecedented transformations of power in the domains of economics, education and culture. Globalization has been accompanied by increased use of the English language, and English learners in China are increasingly aware of the value of this language as a medium to accumulate their own capital, connect with the lives of more people in the world and forge links across space, time and space. My study mainly focuses on the relationship of English and learners’ capital as well as the learner’s investment in the study of English as it is influenced by their identity(ies), which inevitably change across time and space.

1.1. Personal motivation for the study

During my time as an English teacher in a secondary school in a rural area of China, my students frequently came to ask me some questions about their English learning, and some of them were confused about their aims of English learning. Besides the

reason that English is one of required courses, what is the main purpose for their English learning? It is a popular idea that English will afford the opportunities for learners to have an engaged role in a global community and interact in English with a number of people who are more culturally diverse coming from other countries. However, are these underlying motivations really fulfilled in reality? Trying to understand some of the students' eventual disillusion with their English studies was the initial motivation of my research. I wished to comprehend more clearly the students' own attitudes towards English learning. What role do they believe English acquisition plays in their current life and future? As Fontich (2007) has pointed out, teachers need to engage in 'reflexive practice' in order to enrich their teaching knowledge and develop increasingly complex understanding of the learning process of their students.

As both an English learner and teacher in rural China, I have had firsthand experience of English language studies. As a girl raised by a peasant family, I started my English language education in 7th grade. On my first day of secondary school, my English teacher told us we had to learn English well, emphasizing that only by studying hard could we obtain high scores in examinations so that we could go to universities; thereby changing our own fates and escaping from a difficult peasant life in our rural area. After six hard years of studying, I sat the *gaokao* (China's National College Entrance Examination, often abbreviated as CNCEE, “高考” in Chinese) and got high scores in English in the examination. Due to this high score and my interest in English, I could enroll at university where I chose English (teaching) as my major. At the same time, I was harshly aware of the cruel fact that only a small part of my classmates could be enrolled at university; many of my rural classmates and friends were unable to have this opportunity. After several years, we organized a reunion and I found most of my classmates, including the ones who had enrolled in university, had almost totally forgotten all their English. During my secondary school days, I had witnessed all of them completely devoted to the study of English. They memorized the

vocabulary using small cards, recited texts and did numerous practice exercises. Yet, all their investment in English seemed in vain following their graduation. Similarly, and several years later, some of my own English language students complained to me that they found that English could not offer any help to them after more than ten years' of studying and learning English. I found myself wondering which factors were the main causes of this phenomenon? This served as further motivation to do some research about this occurrence.

Later, as an English teacher, I repeated to my own students the words that my English teacher had told me and my classmates. Some of them were not interested in English, but in order to help them get high scores on their examinations, I forced them to learn English through many different kinds of strategies: I asked them to recite texts one by one, gave a dictation every morning, gave them weekly examinations and analyzed their results on tests, and so on. I had never given much thought as to whether it was meaningful or not until one of my students complained to me that he was so tired and doubted whether such investment was a waste of time and effort because he believed English was of little use in reality. I began to suspect that, compared with the students who settled in urban areas, the students who work and live in rural regions are more likely to suffer this problem of motivation. This phenomenon made me think a lot about the identity of an English learner and teacher; which also contributed to leading me to my current situation as a researcher.

Thus, for my study, I focus on a group of students from a school in a rural area of China, and in particular on their trajectories in terms of learning the English language. My research seeks to trace the links between such trajectories and the students' perception on current or future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital, as well as the relationship between the investment they made in English learning and how this is directly and indirectly linked to their identities, which change across time and space. The intersection between language and identity

is a key area of research in Applied Linguistic Studies.

More specifically, and closer to one of the central concerns in applied linguistics, the concept of identity ties in with the view that language use is not only a cognitive endeavour but likewise an immanently social one. The concept sensitises us to think about the reasons for and the conditions under which people use language, the way they are perceived by others as users of language, the meanings they want to convey in particular situations and the resources they draw upon in order to do so. (Zotzmann & O'Regan, 2016, p. 113)

1.2 Social rationale for this study

Since the Third Plenary Session of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party was held in Beijing in 1978, of which the motto was 'Practice is the only real criterion to test the truth' (实践是检验真理的唯一标准, in Chinese), China has undergone rapid economic development and dramatic social reform, achieving significant growth both economically and socially, due to the decision for economic development as well as reform and an opening up to the rest of the world. Simultaneously, increasing socioeconomic disparity has become a problem that could potentially destabilize economic reform, and the existing rigid social-status hierarchy that grew out of a state socialist economy is no longer suited to represent the increasing social and economic fragmentation of Chinese society (Bian, 2002). Even at present, China still is a rural-urban dual-structured society marked by a strict division between rural and urban areas.

By 2005, the most recent year for which data are available, rural–urban income differences had reached their historic peak and were greater than when reforms began with real rural income per capita being only 39 percent of real urban income per capital. (...) In addition to contributing to overall inequality, rural–urban inequality creates incentives for rural–urban migration and urbanization

while at the same time being symptomatic of persistent barriers to population mobility. (Park, 2008, p. 41)

Despite the difficulty in obtaining data, several researchers argue that China's rural–urban gaps are much larger than those found in most other developing countries (Knight, Li & Song, 2006; Eastwood & Lipton, 2004). Sicular, Yue, Gustafsson and Li (2006) have found that rural–urban differences make up at least 25 percent of overall inequality in 2002 for several provinces in China.

In terms of social class, at the beginning of establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), the threefold socialist-era categories of workers, peasants, and cadres were used to classify the Chinese people under Mao's leadership (Liang, 1997). This kind of division is largely based on an individual's officially registered residential status. If a person is registered officially as a rural resident, he or she is considered a farmer, no matter where he or she is or what he or she is doing. Furthermore, China is experiencing an increasingly large gap between the education levels of people holding urban and rural permanent residency permits (*hukou*, or '户口' in Chinese). The research-setting school is located in a rural region and most of students in this school hold rural *hukou* and suffer from the huge urban-rural gap.

Better education and English competence seem to be widely conceived by Chinese middle-class families in urban areas as essential to securing a better future for their children. Due to their easy access to material and social resources, these so-called 'elite' families, are committed to giving their offspring an earlier start in the race for English learning. As a result, the promotion of English and enthusiastic investment in the learning of English by the middle class have exacerbated the gap in learning English between 'those who have' and 'those who have not' (Nunan 2003, p.605; also see Gao, 2008). Due to their and their parents' social status, the English learners in rural China have limited access to profitable resources. The severe gap between urban

and rural areas in China has caused the unfair distribution of resources in English education; these resources are key for the resultant transaction between knowing English and having valuable cultural capital. This implies an urgent need for research into the current situation of rural Chinese English education.

Of course it must be noted that the issues of language education and social equality are hardly new. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, the sociologist Basil Bernstein, drawing on work from Halliday (1969), began exploring the connections between 'code' and 'context'. Bernstein argued that "codes are not directly observable, only speech variants" (1971/2003, p. 12), going on in further research to explore

[T]wo inter-related strands: the various factors which affect children's experience of formal education, and a more general problem of the structure of cultural transmission and change, with special reference to speech. (Bernstein, 2003, p. 13).

Drawing on work from linguists of the caliber of Cassirer (1944, 1953), Whorf (1956) and Sapir (1949), along with (educational development) work by Bruner and colleagues (1956), Bernstein argued that through direct lexical experience of the individual in their familial context, the child becomes 'sensitized' to certain language features. Features that are 'differentiated' (or, on the other hand, 'undifferentiated') by the individual may be preferred in formal education settings, thus having an indirect but important effect on how the students are perceived in the classroom. In other words, through exposure to specific language features, the individual is better able to differentiate these features and respond to them. In the case where these variants of language use are similar to the formal education setting of the individual, a clear advantage is in play.

For Bernstein, the term 'code' refers to the ways in which language is organized according to a set of principles, but in relation to the perceptions of that language in

particular social groups. Thus knowledge of, and use of a ‘restricted’ code will require belonging to the social group that this particular code is associated with. Citing work by Bernstein (1971) and Labov (1972), Lynch and Baker (2016) explain that in educational settings codes that are more commonly used by the upper classes become prioritized over those employed by working class or ethnic minority students.

In terms of educational equality and sociolinguistic and sociocultural backgrounds, numerous studies have shown the impact that linguistic and cultural life experiences can have on students’ access to educational opportunities. Seminal work in this field was carried out in the 1980’s and 1990’s (Brice Heath, 1983; Maybin, 1992; Young, 1992; Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Pollard, 1999). Further along these lines are the studies and publications stemming the Critical Pedagogy (cf. Giroux, 1981, 1988, 1997; McLaren, 1995; Kincheloe & Steinburg, 1997), all of have made a mark on research concerning the way in which language users are perceived within the educational context and their education opportunities and eventual attainment (Dooly & Vallejo, 2009; Ross, Dooly & Hartsmar, 2012).

In particular, Critical Pedagogy has enjoyed resurgence in the area of language learning, as exemplified by the special issue in the journal TESOL Quarterly (2006) and other work; it has continued to expand into studies of plurilingual education (cf. Lüdi & Py, 1986/2013), with the rapidly growing acceptance of concepts such as ‘translanguaging’, which calls into question long-standing notions of ‘codes’ and ‘code-switching’ when dealing with bi/multi-lingual speakers. Coming full circle, this implies that, beginning with the previously mentioned seminal works into understanding language use and language learning (Bernstein, 1971; Labov, 1972), sociolinguistics is at a juncture that requires a re-thinking of the very idea of ‘code’ and ‘language’ as anything but social constructs; placing even further emphasis on the way in which languages may be perceived as valuable (or not) by both individuals and society as a whole. Or, as Otheguy (2016) puts it, translanguaging is “a conception

that sees the bilingual as having a single, or unitary, linguistic competence, as opposed to a dual or bifurcated one” (p. x).

To translanguage is to speak naturally and freely, without regard for the restrictions established by the boundaries of named languages, without heed for the constraints that give dual names and borders and limits to the bilingual’s unitary competence. (Otheguy, 2016, p. xi)

These theories have helped draw blueprints for educators to help transcend language policies and practices that make multiple language speakers (or speakers of unofficial language variants) “victims of the symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1991) that schools have exerted on them, [and] stigmatize their own language practices” (Garcia & Kleyn, 2016, p. 27).

Inevitably, being stigmatized by one’s ‘own language practices’ has an impact on learner identity, which is one of the main foci of this study. Many of these new directions in language learning have been pithily gathered into the comprehensive work by Norton and Toohey (2004) concerning critical pedagogy and language learning. And while my research does not directly deal with the main themes concerning multilingual learners in the classroom, the fundamental issues of social capital found in the line of work cited above have served as a guide for this researcher’s positioning in the current study at hand. In this sense, I consider how the access to resources for learning, practicing and using English (as a Foreign Language) during life experiences has a lasting effect on individual perceptions of professional opportunities later in life.

1.3 English as a global language

It [English] is everywhere. Some 380 million people speak it as their first language and perhaps two-thirds as many again as their second. A billion are learning it,

about a third of the world's population are in some sense exposed to it and by 2050, it is predicted, half the world will be more or less proficient in it. It is the language of globalization—of international business, politics and diplomacy. It is the language of computers and the Internet. You'll see it on posters in Cote d'Ivoire; you'll hear it in pop songs in Tokyo; you'll read it in official documents in Phnom Penh. Deutsche Welle broadcasts in it. Bjork, an Icelander, sings in it. French business schools teach in it. It is the medium of expression in cabinet meetings in Bolivia. Truly, the tongue spoken back in the 1300s only by the 'low people' of England, as Robert of Gloucester put it at the time, has come a long way. It is now the global language.

“A World Empire by Other Means: The Triumph of English,”
(*The Economist*, December 20, 2001)

It seems that English is becoming, or has already become, a global language: “the concept of ‘English as a global language’ (EGL) is not recent, describing a phenomenon that developed and drew momentum, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century” (Briguglia, 2005, p.7). There are other terms applied to the growing use of English across the world: “most notably, ‘English as an international language’ (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (~~ELF~~)” (Briguglia, 2005, p.7.), the latter in particular has spurred considerable academic and practitioner literature amongst language teachers and researchers. “Over the past 15 years or so there has developed a school of thought within English language education and applied linguistics globally which refers to the phenomenon and use of English as a lingua franca (~~ELF~~)” (O'Regan, 2014, p.533). O'Regan goes on to argue the following:

The reader will have noticed that the term ~~ELF~~ is here purposely placed ‘under erasure’ (Spivak, 1976: xvii), with a line drawn through it. This is in order to signal how this term is not just provisional, but inadequate in relation to the sociolinguistic complexity of global and local uses of ‘English’ in the world. As

intimated in the last sentence, the same can also be said of the term ‘English’, a term which not only hides a multitude of varieties within it (Blommaert, 1998), but in a world increasingly acknowledged to be populated by ‘Englishes’ (Kachru, 1985), and with an entire ‘World Englishes’ field dedicated to their research, has long been seen as erroneous and problematic. (O’Regan, 2016, p. 205)

And while O’Regan’s position on ELF as an academic field is quite critical, this statement helps highlight the growing sociopolitical interest in promoting English as a lingua franca, as an international or as a global language, amongst policy-makers and educators. Similarly, other theorists working in Applied Linguistics have noted the growing influence of ‘Neoliberalism’ in education, and in particular in English language teaching as a (or perhaps ‘the’) global language. As Block (2017) notes, “neoliberalism has meant the adoption of the market metaphor as the dominant way to frame all manner of day-to-day activity” (p. 39), including education.

In the broader field of education, the impact of neoliberalism on education has been foregrounded for some time (Hill & Kumar, 2009). The shift from pedagogical to market values has been widely commented on as involving a fundamental shift in educational philosophy: the abandonment of the social and cooperative ethic in favour of individualist and competitive business models. (Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012, p. 6)

Leaving ‘political economy’ aside (as discussed by Block, et al, 2012), it is still almost indisputable that nowadays the growing number of global interactions has stimulated demands for more efficient communication across linguistic borders. To achieve this, a great number of individuals are learning English, and many of them are hoping their language skills will enhance their paycheck or land them a better job. And as O’Regan points out, the promotion of English as a ‘neutral’ global language can and should be interrogated.

The ~~ELF~~ case proceeds from a liberal-idealist rationalism and acquiescence to the geo-capitalist status quo, which issues from its incapacity to critique, or even name, capitalism as a primary agent in determining the global distribution of economic and linguistic resources, and thus individuals' life chances as well. Instead, the world system is taken as given, and economic, gendered, racial, religious and class inequalities within and between the populations of nation states are discounted in favour of a focus on lingua franca forms as ideologically neutral and self-emancipating and, less promisingly, as geo-culturally Eurocentric and the property of cosmopolitan bilingual elites. ~~ELF~~ as a political project thus provides a pillar of support to mobile capital in the reproduction of global class stratifications along linguistic lines. To put this another way, those who have most access to intercultural lingua francas and the most opportunity to use them are those with the highest quotients of economic, social, cultural and linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). (O'Regan, 2016, p. 212)

Two decades ago, Crystal (1997, p. 3) stated, "A language achieves a genuinely global status when it develops a special role that is recognized in every country", and almost a decade later Krashen (2003, p.100) claimed that the world is suffering from "English fever," an overwhelming desire to acquire English as a global language. In East Asian Countries, the English language acts as an influential way of communication in foreign trade, in business, and in politics (Ross, 2008; Sasaki, 2008). Currently, English as a popular communication medium is used in many social fields, such as education, academia, business, technology, sport, as well as popular entertainment. In general, in the globalized economy, learning an internationally dominant language is increasingly viewed as a key to individual and national economic success (Kubota, 2011; Niño-Murcia, 2003; Park, 2011; Yates, 2011). Grin (2001) states that competency in English is regarded as especially important for national economies and it can also provide individuals with income benefits. Another powerful discourse posits that English connects people globally even though more

than three quarters of the world population are non-English-speaking. (Graddol, 2006).

The trend towards global English does not appear to be diminishing, despite quite critical voices that have emerged concerning the link between an increasingly globalized consumer society and the expansion of the language (cf. Bamforth, 1993; Canagarajah, 1999; Block, 2002; Gray, 2010; Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012; O'Regan, 2014; Block & Gray, 2015). Five decades have passed since Bourdieu (1977) argued that English has become a special kind of cultural capital. Within this perspective, English performs as a kind of commodity that offers its speaker the opportunity to gain access to privileged discourses and resources. Nevertheless, it must be recognized, as indicated above, that the entire trend of global teaching speakers of other languages has lately been criticized for its role in promoting neoliberal values. A newer recognition of the importance of linguistic diversity provides a background for its critique, largely because global English “fits the political and economic context of our current sociohistorical period—in particular, the desire for flexible workers and lifelong learners to perform service-oriented and technological jobs as part of a post-Fordist political economy (Flores, 2013, p. 501; see also Moore, 2016)

Despite some well-founded criticisms, it can be claimed that English is still widely positioned as a privileged discourse and resource, since people who master English are able to communicate with a large potential pool of other people who have different national and cultural backgrounds as well as allowing them access to multiple perspectives. Such communication may offer huge potential for broadening one's horizon, resulting in tensions that challenge an individual's biases and stereotypes.

No matter where one stands in regard to English as a global language, no one

denies the dominant position English has achieved worldwide or that its spread seems to be accelerating. However, this development is not hailed universally as a welcome event. And whether we consider it a good thing or otherwise for English to hold this position, we need to keep in mind the cautions of writers such as Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999, p.21), who remind us of the ‘responsibility to examine how a command of English relates to contemporary power structures’. (Briguglia, 2005, p. 10).

In any case, it is quite evident that English has acquired considerable social and cultural capital (in the sense that is it applied by Bourdieu, see chapter 2). Almost paradoxically, given that it is the world’s largest bastion of communism, this is especially apparent in China, as is evidenced by the following statement.

A vast national appetite has elevated English to something more than a language: it is not simply a tool but a defining measure of one’s life potential. China today is divided by class, opportunity, and power, but one of its few unifying beliefs—something shared by waiters, politicians, intellectuals, tycoons—is the power of English... English has become an ideology, a force strong enough to remake your résumé, attract a spouse, or catapult you out of a village. (Osnos, 2008)

The English language currently holds unprecedented importance in many of China’s major cities, especially in the eastern coastal regions. English is seen as holding a very important potential for cultural, social and economic profit to the people who master it. For many Chinese, investing time and effort to learn English translates into the opportunity to gain access to well-known colleges and to qualify for well-paid jobs. A number of world enterprises require a certain English level for their employees.

1.4 English language education in China in relation to historical events

The development of English teaching and learning entwines closely with Chinese politics. This section mainly focuses on the English education history after the establish of People's Republic of China (PRC). The whole English language education history is divided into four stages according to relevant historical events in China.

1.4.1 First stage: From Qing dynasty to PRC

The history of English in China may date back to 1637 when four ships under the command of Captain John Weddell arrived in Macao and Guangzhou (Bolton, 2002). After defeat in the "Opium Wars", the relationship between China and Western maritime countries turned violent and China was forced to sign a series of unfair treaties which gave foreigners privileges such as free access to ports, extraterritoriality and the right to live in the hinterland (Roberts, 1999). During the signing of the treaties, the government had many affairs requiring discussion with Western countries so it realized the underlying need for having trained professional translators. Through professional translators, not only the terms of contract could be translated to the officers, but also, in the long term, 'material' and 'skill-based' foreign knowledge could be brought into China by professional translators interpreting some books or communicating with foreigners. Meanwhile some scholars and officials arrived to an understanding that it was through technological transfer, which largely depended on English translation, that the nation could be strengthened. All of these movements stimulated the development of English in China.

In 1862, under the Great Qing Dynasty, the first English Language School –Tongwen Guan-was officially opened by the Chinese Government to train ten men for the newly created diplomatic corps in Beijing (Deyi, 1992). English was the first language to be taught there and later Russian, French, German and Japanese were introduced (Hung, 2002). Following that, similar schools were set up in Shanghai,

Guangzhou and Fuzhou (Pride & Liu, 1988; Roberts, 1999; Ross, 1992). In 1903, English entered the national secondary school curriculum as a required course (Cleverley, 1985) and has remained there ever since.

1.4.2 Second stage: Republican period (1919-1949)

In 1919, a political and literacy student movement named after a demonstration in Beijing on May 4th, 1919 to protest Japanese territorial aggressions, known as the ‘May Fourth Movement’, broke out. This has been signaled as the point when China became more receptive to the Western idea of democracy and China's economy became more open to the Western world (Chow, 1960). Thus, following this demonstration, China experienced a republican period from 1919 to 1949. During this period, foreign languages were regarded as a tool for struggle and personal transformation by a number of political activists. Cities such as Shanghai became a melting pot for intellectual debate and multiculturalism, with Western philosophers, literati, jazz musicians and Hollywood film stars gaining popularity (Wood, 1998; Jones, 2001). Moreover, college admissions were based on the results of competitive entrance examinations that required foreign-language competence (Yeh, 1990). As a result, the quality of English language teaching was boosted since many Chinese professors went abroad to get academic training and upon returning to China, advanced knowledge of the West. Simultaneously, a large number of foreigners were invited to teach in China to introduce advanced technology and the culture of their countries.

However, following the communist victory, The People’s Republic of China (PRC) was established, leading to a totally different political, social, cultural and economic system in China. Inevitably this meant a new educational system had to be set up as well. The Korean War in the early 1950s and the Cold War between the East and West resulted in the national campaign in China to ‘resist America’ (Price, 1979, p.32). English was described as an ‘American cultural aggression’ by governmental

propaganda. Meanwhile, China developed an intimate relationship with the Soviet Union. The new educational system, including educational structures, curriculum, pedagogy and teaching materials, was relentlessly copied from the Soviet Union. As a result, by the early 1950s, Russian was the most important foreign language in China's schools and universities. English language teaching was relegated to a few specialized foreign language institutions, which were meant to train foreign language teachers, translators, and interpreters (Zhang, 1984).

1.4.3 Third period: Socialist revolutionary period (1949-1978)

In the late 1950s, the initial Sino-Soviet relationship between China and USSR broke down and Soviet models were discarded. The official slogan changed from "Learn from the Soviet Union" into "Learn from all the advanced experiences of the world" (Dzau, 1990, p.19). As one of the consequences of this shift English became the favored foreign language once again. With the trend to move education toward a more academic orientation, foreign language was introduced as a compulsory subject in China's college entrance examinations by 1962 (Ross, 1993). In 1964, the Seven-year Guideline for Foreign Language Education was published leading to a short period of revival of English teaching in the early 1960s. However, in the middle of 1960's, China experienced the Cultural Revolution, which was launched by Chairman Mao Zedong in 1966, mainly in order to destroy traditions and to purge what was perceived as the pernicious influence of foreign culture from Chinese society. Learning foreign languages from capitalist countries was considered as 'taking the capitalist road', thus all foreign languages – not just English- became anathema in the education system.

Everything and everyone related to foreign capitalist countries suffered suspicion and were labeled *ducao* (“毒草” in Chinese, meaning poisonous weeds). Teaching English was forbidden in nearly all schools. Many scholars once trained in capitalist countries and foreign language teachers, even people who had relatives abroad, were

accused of spreading capitalism or spying for foreign countries, and many of them were abused physically and mentally. Foreign classic literature was burned or taken away and stored by the government; contemporary foreign literature was banned from import; foreign newspapers, radio, and movies were forbidden (Fu, 1986).

1.4.4 Forth stage: Open door period (1978-now)

Following the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution, China encountered a new period of economic and cultural development. A strategic objective called 'Four Modernizations' which targeted agriculture, industry, national defense and science and technology- was proposed by the government. Under the new leader, Deng Xiaoping, the 'Open Door Policy' was put into practice as well. The government asserted that "the histories of various countries show that a closed-door policy harms national development. For socialist construction we need to absorb and utilize the rich knowledge accumulated by the capitalist countries, their advanced technologies and ways of management" (Cleverly, 1985, p. 264). There is a famous saying of Deng Xiaoping "It's not important whether a cat is white or black. A good cat is one that catches the rat." ("不管黑猫白猫，捉到老鼠就是好猫" in Chinese). The black or white cat refers to either capitalist or socialist systems, and catching the rat refers to powerful social and economic development. Under these circumstances, foreign languages began to be considered as embodying the "scientific, progressive, and creative" thinking that China's leaders advocated for modernization (Ross, 1992, p.250). Deng Xiaoping (1979) suggested that all people who were able to learn a foreign language should learn it.

1.5 Current trends English language education in China

English has become a core course in secondary schools and colleges once again, and has been introduced in many primary schools from the third grade onwards. The promotion of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as part of the national curriculum is not without its challenges as it brings to the fore its own form of "Chinese

neo-liberalism” which has its “unique, even contradictory features: China has promoted radical marketization alongside explicit central government policy control” (Guo & Guo, 2016, p. 4). How this has affected the lives of individual EFL students in rural China, in particular in the eastern coastal regions, is the focus of this study.

1.5.1 Policies for English language education

The Chinese Government is convinced that proficiency in English is an essential aim of education, so plenty of policy attention has been paid to basic English language education. Today, English is firmly established as a core subject in secondary schools nationwide and in the primary curriculums in developed regions (Liu & Gong, 2000). In the *1982 Secondary School English Syllabus* (1982 年中学英语教学大纲, in Chinese), foreign languages were considered an important tool for the study of cultural and scientific knowledge and the promotion of international relations. Statistics showed that approximately 97% of China's 320,000 full-time secondary school foreign language teachers taught English (Ross, 1992). Nationwide, eight million primary school pupils were studying English as a school subject for two to three hours a week, according to Hu (2002a). The *1993 Secondary School English Syllabus* (1993 年中学英语教学大纲, in Chinese) stated that the purpose of English teaching is to make students acquire the basic knowledge of English and the initial ability to communicate in English by listening, speaking, reading and writing. It aims to stimulate students' interest in English learning, develop good learning habits and establish a good foundation for further English learning. It can help students receive the ideological and moral patriotism, socialist education and develop students' ability for thinking and self-learning. According to the 1993 syllabus, students' communicative competence was to be promoted through a variety of teaching strategies:

Language form has to be combined with its meaning and with what the students think and want to say. Special attention should be paid to turning the language

skills acquired through practice into the capacity of using the language for the purpose of communication... When the students realize that they can communicate in English, they will go on learning with more interest and motivation. (Adamson & Morris, 1997, p. 22)

The importance and significance of English has been underscored in China's public education policy due to overarching national strategic needs: producing and reinforcing national wealth. As former Vice Premier of the State Council Li Lanqing stated, English is "not merely an educational issue per se but an issue associated with the modernization of the country (cited Ross, 1993, p.56). In 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education (MOE) introduced the new English Curriculum Standards (ECS). The National Curriculum (MOE 2003, 2011) requires the introduction of English at Primary Three. There is flexibility for school principals and local education departments for an even 'earlier' introduction of English. In fact, many developed and wealthy regions and cities commonly introduce English from Primary One and Two (Qi, 2016, p.14).

All students of university are required to have at least two years of foreign language learning experience. Students must fulfill the requirements of English as the foreign language at the college level in order to graduate and obtain their degree. Currently across China, many states are aware that an English-speaking workforce can help their economies integrate and become more competitive on the world market. In increasing numbers, many states are pumping resources into government-funded English language education programs from kindergarten onward (Johnson, 2009, p.133). According to the statistical data, there are about 80 million students studying English in general secondary schools alone. Added to this number are an estimated 40 million learners of English in primary schools and specialized/vocational secondary schools (Hu, 2004).

A 2006 national survey reveals that out of those with junior secondary education qualifications or above, 67.4% in China had studied at least one foreign language (SGO: Steering Group Office for Survey of Language Situation in China, 2006, p.118). A national survey reveals that of all the individuals in mainland China with foreign-language learning experience, 93.8% had studied English (Wei & Su, 2012). As Table 1 below shows, among the people with foreign-language learning experience in Mainland China, as many as 93.8% had studied English, 7.1% Russian, and 2.5% Japanese, while only 0.3% of respondents reported learning any other foreign language. That is to say, among 415.95 million Chinese foreign-language learners, 390.16 million had learnt English (Wei & Su, 2012, p.11).

Table 1: Foreign languages learnt by respondents that had studied foreign languages

| | English | French | Russian | Spanish | Arabic | Japanese | German | Others |
|----------------|---------|--------|---------|---------|--------|----------|--------|--------|
| Mainland China | 93.80% | 0.29% | 7.07% | 0.05% | 0.13% | 2.54% | 0.13% | 0.16% |
| Beijing | 85.37% | 1.44% | 19.40% | 0.23% | 0.00% | 5.68% | 0.58% | 0.25% |
| Shanghai | 91.74% | 0.62% | 11.71% | 0.07% | 0.00% | 6.13% | 0.55% | 0.14% |
| Tianjin | 92.98% | 1.40% | 9.15% | 0.11% | 0.00% | 5.13% | 0.11% | 0.02% |
| Chongqing | 94.88% | 0.33% | 7.50% | 0.13% | 0.01% | 2.29% | 0.32% | 0.20% |

Source: SGO, 2006, p.119

1.5.2 Current English language education system

The current English education system in China includes three types of English education, the formal national English education, local private English courses, and English education supported with international funding (Huang, 2005). In this study, English learning and teaching mainly refers to formal national English education.

English is one of the core subjects in the current curriculum and compulsory subjects in *gaokao*. *Gaokao* is a prerequisite for entrance into almost all higher education institutions at the undergraduate level. It is usually taken by students in their last year of senior high school. The exam is administered over the course of two or three days. Three core subjects are mandatory everywhere: Chinese, Mathematics, and a foreign language—usually English, but this may also be substituted by Japanese, Russian or French. The other six standard subjects are three sciences: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and three humanities: History, Geography, and Political Education.

The examination is highly competitive, and the prospective examinees and their parents experience enormous pressure to achieve good scores. For the majority, especially the students from rural regions, it is a watershed that divides two dramatically different lives. If one gets a high mark in *gaokao*, he/she can go to an elite-level university and it is very possible to gain a well-paid job, meaning that eventually the students from rural regions can get an urban *hukou* and settle in urban cities. The other side of the coin (lack of admission to an elite-level university) means that many of the students will go to cities to search for labor which is typically very hard and with a low salary. Because of the restriction of *hukou* policy, their many rights such as medical treatment and the education of their children is not guaranteed. In China, with its history of a meritocracy-based imperial examination system, education has been held in high esteem as a means of promoting social mobility (Cheng, 2010). In that case, English, as a compulsory subject, is considered as one of the overarching factors in *gaokao*.

Moreover, once an individual has gained access to a university through the *gaokao* English is an obligatory subject for all majors in Chinese universities and colleges, not just language or literature or humanity majors. Even non-English majors are required to take college English courses for at least two years (Cheng, 2008). And eventually, in order to be conferred a bachelor's degree in Chinese universities, it is required that

the students must pass the College English Test (CET for short) – an English language proficiency test. Furthermore, apart from English as an academic requirement, English skills are tested for all those seeking promotion in governmental, educational, scientific research, medical, financial, business and other government-supported institutions (He, 2001).

English is one of the three core subjects on the *gaokao*, as has been explained. Hence, in order to enter into a good university, Chinese students must make an effort to study English from primary school up to high school. Even at the university level, students have to continue their English learning because the certificates of the College English Test or the Test for English Majors have become a graduation requirement for undergraduates. In China, the College English Test (CET) is one of the major English tests. It is a large-scale standardized test administered nationwide by the National College English Testing Committee on behalf of the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education (MOE) in China (Cheng, 2008). It aims at measuring the English proficiency of college/university undergraduate students in accordance with the College English Teaching Syllabus (*National College English Syllabus for Non-English Majors*, 1999). The CET is a battery of tests that is comprised of the CET Band 4 (CET-4), the CET Band 6 (CET-6).

CET is one of the most debated tests among academics in China. The CET was made possible due to the rapid expansion of tertiary education in Chinese society; it, in turn, has contributed greatly to the development route in English language teaching and learning for Chinese society (Zheng & Cheng, 2008). Furthermore, for English major students in Chinese colleges and universities, the Test for English Majors (TEM) is regarded as an important test. The TEM assesses the English language performance of English major students and is administrated by the National Advisory Commission on Foreign Language Teaching in Higher Education (NACFLT) in China. The test includes two levels: TEM-4 which is a graduation requirement for the English major

students and TEM-8 which is the highest level for English major students.

1.5.3 A new reform of English language education

To enhance the development of English education and as experiments of curricular reform, the State Education Commission of China granted Shanghai Municipality and Zhejiang Province the autonomy to develop their own curriculums according to their local needs. One of the reforms is using English as an additional language of instruction for several school subjects (e.g. mathematics, physics, and computer science), which is known as bilingual education in the Chinese context. Following this bandwagon, hundreds of schools in economically developed regions, most of which are coastal and urban areas, have adopted this reform.

On 4th September, 2014, the State Council Information of the People's Republic of China held a news conference about the “Implementation of Opinions on Deepening the Reform of the Enrolment System”. The proposed changes in the *gaokao*, which figured in the policy announcement, caused hot public debate. The underlying reason for this reform is that many experts doubt whether it is a waste to invest so much time, money and resource in English language learning for both those who are already studying English and the general public. The experts cite that currently many students spend so much time and energy on English language learning that it has negatively influenced the learning of the Chinese language as well as the learning in other subject areas. There is also debate about whether English is a dangerous mechanism that actually reinforces inequalities based on proficiency levels between urban and rural China. Moreover, although many students spend a considerable amount of time on English language learning, it is seldom used in their daily life or after they graduate from university. So the focus of this reform is practical language use which many feel is not actual reform of the current education system enrolment.

The policy proposes to change the notorious once-in-a-lifetime examination system.

Instead, students will be able to sit the tests twice so as to alleviate study pressure, and only the highest score they obtain will be counted. These changes are to be piloted in selected provinces such as Zhejiang and cities such as Shanghai and then promoted nationwide starting in 2017, with a new examination and an admission system projected to be established by 2020. A number of local authorities are undertaking pilot programs to work towards the 2017 goal. For example, in Beijing, in 2016 students will take a test with a reduced proportional points score for English twice a year and use their highest score for the *gaokao*. Gu Mingyuan, Senior Professor of Beijing Normal University, Honorary President of Chinese Society of Education, Councilor of Education China Group, clarified that the reforms do not involve scrapping the English requirement from the entry process altogether (Gu, 2014). Instead, students will sit an external, “socialized” exam that can be taken multiple times throughout the year as part of the admissions process. And he explained, “The current college recruitment policy assesses students by computing every tiny bit of their scores into the *gaokao*, which does not do justice to their talent and is not a scientific way of appraisal (目前的大学招生政策按照学生高考成绩的每一分来评估学生, 无法公正的评估学生的才能, 也是不科学的评价方法).” He added, “The policy neither means that English will be removed from test categories in the *gaokao*, nor does it weaken English’s place in current curricula (这项政策并不意味着英语退出高考, 也不会削弱目前的英语教学)” (Gu, 2014). It is within this context of change in language education in China that this doctoral thesis has been developed.

1.5.4 Public concern for English language education

There exists public concern about the values of learning English. It is believed that students can develop positive attitudes and values, enrich their life experiences, broaden world vision, and enhance their thinking skills through the process of learning a foreign language (Cheng, 2011). Moreover, English is, as we have already seen, the most widely learned and used foreign language in China.

Currently, Chinese economic development policies emphasize the need for further

recruitment and employment of skilled workers with competency in English in order to ensure benefits from international trade, as well as guarantee an important role in diplomatic and political issues. As a result, English has become the standard for one's "potential and qualification" in college entrance examinations and in job placement (Kim, 2005, p.57). Within this atmosphere, English competence is seen as conferring to people a "symbolic capital-prestige and honor as well as economic capital-material wealth" (Earling, 2004, p.23). Especially during the preparation of the Beijing Olympic Games in 2008 and the World Expo in Shanghai, a kind of phenomenon *yingyu re* ("英语热", in Chinese), "English Fever" appeared in most of the big cities of China. The government organized short courses in English and broadcast new TV and radio programs aimed at teaching easy and elementary English to enable officials and ordinary people to communicate with foreign visitors. Nowadays, the role and status of English in China seems to have reached unprecedented heights.

With China's accession to the World Trade Organization (*Renmin Ribao* 9 November 2001, p.1), international cooperation is playing an important role in China's educational development. China has cooperated closely with international organizations such as UNESCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, World Bank and many other international or regional organizations (Yang, 2015, p79). It seems that it is a mainstream idea that English is a 'golden key' that opens all the doors to social and economic mobility in much research. As early as in 1997 Adamson and Morris claimed, due to its direct link to modernization, openness to the outside world and a certain social cachet, English had become a prized commodity and a prerequisite for access to higher education and lucrative employment opportunities since the introduction of economic reforms, from 1978 onwards (Adamson & Morris, 1997). And as Yang (2015) stated, with the open-door policy English was not only a tool for China's modernization but a ticket for individual social mobility and academic advancement (p.77). This appears to be indisputable in certain cities and regions of China such as the developed and coastal provinces. Nevertheless, the 'golden key'

can't open all the 'doors', for instance, the rural areas where people still suffer the problem of poverty both in material possessions and education opportunities. These rural areas are occluded and moreover there is no need to access to external information. In short, English as a foreign language holds little value or interest to most local people in these areas.

1.5.5 The gap between urban and rural regions in English language education

There is a widening gap in the quality of basic English language education between different regions of China (Hu, 2002b; Nunan, 2003). In the comprehensive overview of English Language Teaching in China, Cortazzi and Jin (1996) mention "there are significant differences in language teaching developments between the major cities and small cities, between rural towns and countryside, between coastal and inland areas, between north and south, between key and non-key schools or universities" (p.61). Rural secondary schools suffer palpable limitations both in resources as well as in the quality of teachers. According to the investigations carried out by Hu Gugangwei (2003) among first-year university students who completed their secondary English education in developed regions and counterparts coming from rural regions, there are obvious distinctions in classroom participation, phonological awareness, word identification, oral proficiency, previous learning experiences and English learning methods. It was found that even the students who got the highest score from rural and undeveloped regions did not receive effective English instruction, without even considering those students who failed to gain access to university. All this, despite the fact that in March 1998 the Ministry of Education issued "Recommendations on Improving the Culture Quality Education" (Cao, 2016) and defined the concept as follows:

The basic qualities of college students include moral quality, cultural quality, professional quality and physical and psychological quality, among which cultural quality is the foundation. The cultural quality education we advocate is

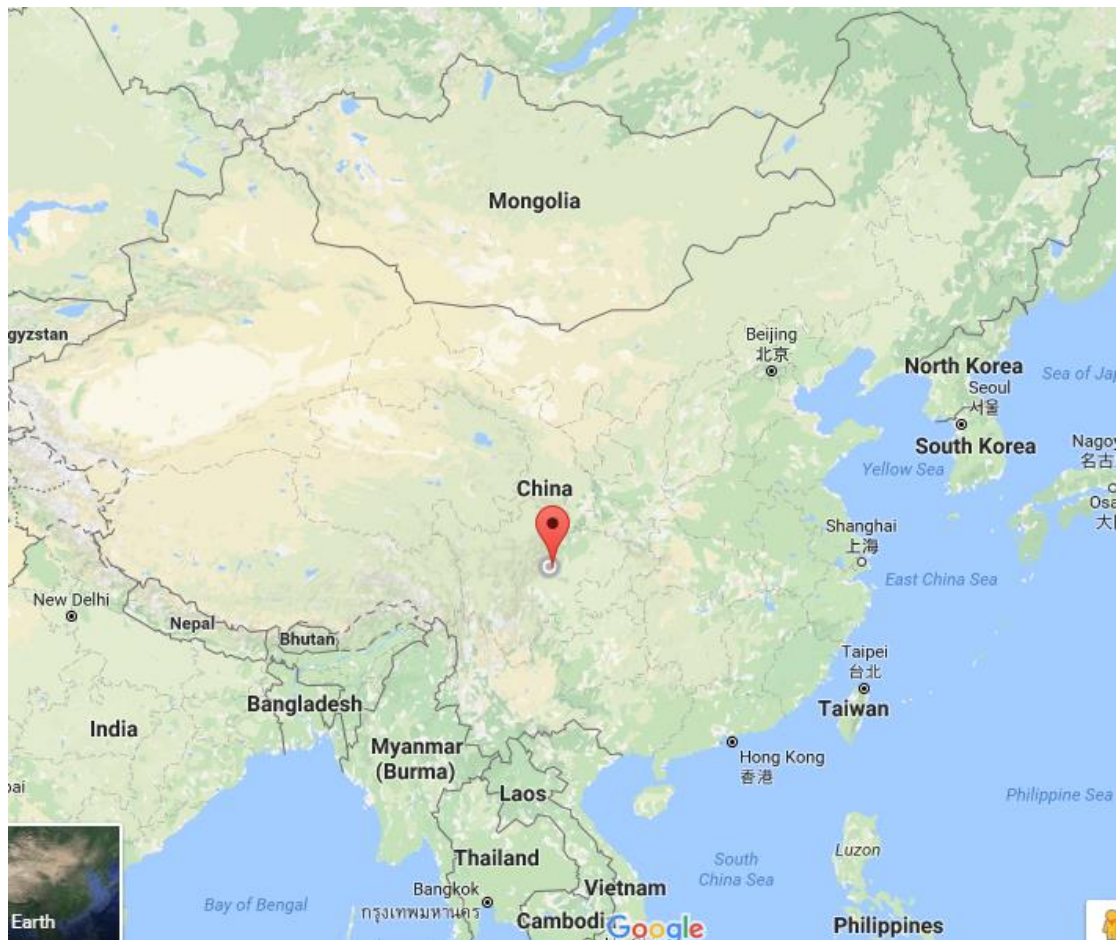
mainly about humanistic quality education (*renwen suzhi jiaoyu* 人文素质教育). By enhancing arts education for students of science and engineering and science education for students of arts respectively, we hope to raise the cultural and aesthetic taste, and humanistic and scientific quality of all college students. (MOE 1998, p. 1)

Despite these attempts at reform, many schools still adopt traditional teaching method, especially in rural areas. All of the participants in my research are from rural areas, as I have mentioned in the introduction. The majority of them could not get access to English language learning until they entered secondary school. In contrast, it is required by the curricular reform in Shanghai that the grade level for compulsory English instruction be lowered from Primary 5 to Primary 1 (Hu, 2002a) in order to furnish students with contact in English. When I had opportunities to visit the schools in economically developed urban areas, a huge gap in English acquisition was clearly borne out between these students and my own rural students. All the distinctions could be attributable to the joint results of a series of social, economic and cultural factors between urban and rural regions in China.

1.6 Location of the study and its relevance

In this study, all of the participants are from a small town in the Sichuan Province which lies in the southwest of China. The research-setting secondary school, which is named Bright Secondary School (name given for it in this thesis) is also located in this small town.

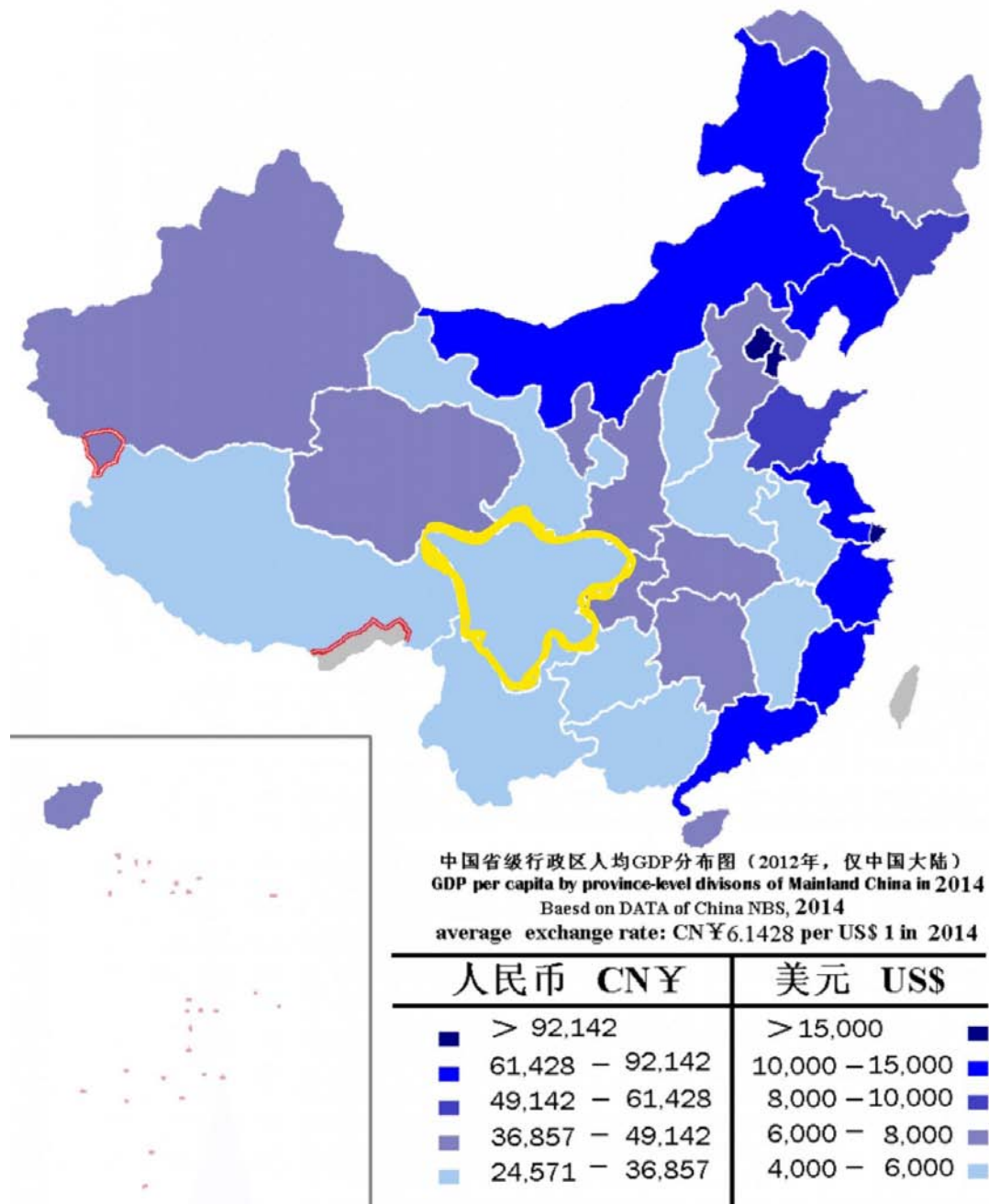
Figure.1. The location of the research-setting secondary school



Source: Google maps

Across China there are huge discrepancies in income, education and literacy, life expectancy and mortality. Based on the division of China into three economic regions, namely Eastern, Central and Western regions (Yao, 2011), there are marked differences in the level of economic development among the regions, although, of course, each one has its own developmental characteristics, natural resources and socio-cultural conditions. Sichuan Province, where the research-setting school is located, belongs to the Western regions and less developed than the coastal regions.

Figure. 2 GDP per capita by province-level divisions of Mainland China in 2014



Source: Kilpatrick (14th April, 2015)

Note: The province which is circled with a yellow line is Sichuan Province

CN¥ is the currency of China

In the area of the research-setting school, most of the young men go to more developed coastal provinces as labor migrants. The low incomes and poor housing conditions of migrant workers make it impossible for their children to accompany

them to the cities. Many people leave a large number of children at home to be taken care of by their relatives, commonly by their grandparents with little or no education. The research-setting school is no exception; a high percentage of students are ‘left-behind children’ who can only meet their parents once a year. ‘Left-behind children’ is a phenomenon that occurs due to the rapid economic development throughout China and which has caused a rich-poor gap between rural and urban regions. Studies show that the millions of left-behind suffer safety problem and mental-health issues (Lu, 2012).

As mentioned previously, China is experiencing an increasingly large gap between the education levels of people holding urban and rural permanent residency permits *hukou* (‘户口’ in Chinese). Furthermore, as it has been outlined previously, better education and English competence seem to be widely conceived by newly emerging Chinese middle-class families in urban areas as essential to securing a better future for their children and these (elite) families have far easier access to material and social resources, their children have an earlier start in the race of English learning, resulting in a gap in learning English between ‘those who have’ and ‘those who have not’ (Nunan 2003, p.605; see also Gao, 2008). Also, as stated in this introduction, this implies an urgent need for research into the current situation of rural Chinese education.

Under current government policies, anyone with a specialized secondary education and above will be given the status as an urban dweller and will be assigned by the government to work as a technician in urban areas or as a civil servant at township level in rural areas. That means even young people with better education from a farming family will leave the farmland to work in a position assigned by the government if they meet all of the educational requirements. This implies that they will have steady jobs; known informally in China as the ‘gold bowl’ (‘金饭碗’ in Chinese). This government strategy has resulted in the flow of well-educated people

out of rural areas (sometimes colloquially referred to as a ‘brain drain’). Consequently, rural areas are in a disadvantaged position in terms of training, as well as human resources.

Most youth are aware that in order to ‘flee’ to the city, the most effective and only way is through *gaokao*. If one gets a high score in *gaokao*, one can enroll in a good university and graduate with educational qualifications that will act as a bridge to city life because almost any decent job in a city has strict requirements concerning educational qualifications. During the process of achieving the *gaokao*, English occupies an important part. Moreover, even if they graduate from college/university in other subjects other than languages, for most Chinese undergraduates, the credentials of English acquisition are highly valued in the labor market. English competence seems to enhance one’s opportunities for landing a good job and getting promoted in the workplace in most cases, especially in big developed cities. It is the main reason and motivation for the participants from college to invest in English learning. Thus, in reality, being successful in various English tests and examinations is considered as the current or potential cultural capital which can bring future economic and social capital for many Chinese students.

Chapter 2. Research questions and significance

2.1 Driving research question

For my study, I focus on a group of students from a school in a rural area of China, and in particular on their trajectories in terms of learning the English language. My research seeks to trace the links between such English learning trajectories and the students' perceptions of current or future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital. Based on my first-hand experience as an English teacher, during research process, I have narrowed down my driving research question step by step:

To what extent do students in rural China perceive learning English as a valuable form of cultural, social and/or economic capital which will impact their current or future achievements?

In this regard, Pierre Bourdieu's work on the distribution of capital in society and on how social inequalities are reproduced as a key guiding framework for this study. According to Bourdieu (1977, 1986), capital is not only economic but is also social and cultural; in other words, society is structured by the differential distribution of economic, cultural and social capital. These forms of capital are key factors for either empowerment of individuals or their disenfranchisement, by ensuring access to, and eventual success in given fields, or lack of, thus leading to the stratification of society.

In terms of education, Bourdieu believed that the education system was a primary site for both the production and the reproduction of social, cultural and economic stratification.

Pierre Bourdieu's theory of cultural capitalism includes both cultural production and reproduction in schools. The cultural capital, the *habitus* of the middle class, is expressed through its habits of thought, assumptions and complexions, which

are particularly expressed through the system of schooling: the school inculcates, partly through the formal curriculum, but particularly through the informal curriculum (...). (Ross, Dooly & Hartsmar, 2012, p. 7)

A key part of how cultural capitalism is produced, reproduced and often controlled through explicit and implicit assessment is through language(s).

A common axis of disadvantage lies in the concept of evaluation [of languages – in particular minority languages], whether for placement purposes, diagnostic purposes or for academic purposes. Indeed, these underlying propositions quite often overlap. (...) Embedded assumptions about language and literacy development can influence local practices and discourses of minority language students' abilities – and concepts of accountability for language and literacy learning (...). (Dooly & Vallejo, 2009, pp. 7, 8).

Language is a powerful form of cultural capital, or a commodity in Heller's (2003) terms. Bourdieu (1977, 1986) thus underscores the implicit power of language competence, and helps us to understand that language competence and language learning cannot be understood apart from access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital, as well as constructs such as social identity. For example, in modern China, access to English language learning and competence allows individuals to distinguish themselves from others and to gain social and economic distinction, while at the same time this access is not equal for all individuals.

In this regard, Bonny Norton's (2000) notion of 'investment' helps link Bourdieu's work on the distribution of capital in society and on how social inequalities are reproduced to a theory of language learning. Her research on second language learning focuses on learners' social identities and their social positioning in terms of

the foreign language in order to explain their access, successes or failures (see also Moore, 2006). According to Norton (2010, p.353):

The construct of investment [...] signals the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it. If learners ‘invest’ in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital.

In short, the notion of ‘investment’ is linked to assumed or tangibly possible returns on investment (social and cultural capital as understood by Bourdieu), which is in turn related to the language learner’s subjectivity and identity - how the learner sees herself in relation to this investment in the imagined or tangible community of English speakers (what does access to this community mean for them?). Or in the words of Norton (2013, p. 45), identity is “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future”. In particular, this study looks at how the participants in this study, students from a rural secondary school, see their future possibilities in relation to their English language studies; although, as Norton and others have warned, it must be acknowledged that the “socially imaginable” is not necessarily “socially available” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 39).

2.2 Research questions

Based on my driving questions, my specific research questions are crystallized as follows

- *To what extent is English perceived as a valuable form of cultural capital by a group of students at a secondary school in rural China and by former students who have gone to college?*
- *(How) do young people from a school in rural China construct their relationships*

with learning the English language in relation to their perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital?

- *How can the social capital that these students possess now help to explain their motivation and/or investment in English learning?*
- *How do their changing identities across time and space affect their motivation/ investment in English learning?*

These questions are addressed through an analysis of data compiled during communication with students both at a distance and through face-to-face discussions and observations. The data corpus includes on-line chat transcripts and face-to-face interviews, focus group transcripts and field notes from observing their behavior and attitudes in a focus group discussion. This study aims to understand the role social capital has in determining student choices (e.g. investment, identity) concerning learning English, in particular in Chinese rural areas. It also aims to examine to what extent English has become a ‘cultural capital’ in these areas. It will look at the role of identity and investment, in particular in face of challenges that these learners face, in contrast to those that they would face if they had received their education in more urban areas of China. This interest in identity and investment is following the lines of research of Applied Linguistics, especially since the early 1990s when scholars became more interested in language learners’ identity as a part of social theory of learning.

[...] this rise has not come about because applied linguistics suddenly began to talk about identity in the 1990s. Rather, it has been the result of systematic and extensive borrowing from contiguous social science fields of inquiry. Thus, in her early attempt to develop a theory of social identity in second language learning (SLL), Norton (1995) drew heavily on the work of the social theorist Chris Weedon (1987) and the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977). In more recent work, second language researchers look for inspiration and cite considerably longer lists of scholars who are social theorists, sociologists and anthropologists. The rise of

identity in SLL has, therefore, been a question of catching up with developments in other social sciences. (Block, 2007, p. 2)

2.3. Research significance

As to the question of why this study is significant, the following reasons can be offered. Firstly, it reveals social class is one of the determining factors in the process of English learning for Chinese students in rural areas and has a vital effect on the extent to which English can be perceived as cultural and other forms of capital. As has been outlined above, students from rural regions of China are often confronted with mitigating factors which frequently impede their proceeding to higher education, which then causes them to have to make more effort during their educational journeys compared with their peers who are from urban areas. Tracing their trajectories in terms of ‘investment’ may help teachers in rural areas facilitate this process in the future as it will help underscore deficiencies in the current system that may ameliorated to some extent by the individual teacher. Social capital, which is determined by one’s social class, helps to explain motivation and investment to English learning.

Secondly, this study offers the student participants opportunities to make their own voice heard by tracking their English learning journey, during which their stories of pleasure, disappointment and anxiety are recorded. Thirdly, this study offers an opportunity to understand how students in rural China construct English acquisition in relation to their current and perceived future economic and social capital. On the other hand, I hope this study can offer opportunities for teachers in rural regions to help their students ‘overcome’ the negative attributes of learning English in rural settings. It can be concluded that the lack of sufficient economic and social capital influences student participants’ concepts of self (standards, esteem, and values) and academic achievement. In addition, this study offers insight into the reproduction of educational environments (cf. Bourdieu, 1971, 1990; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Apple, 1995, Giroux,

1981, 1997) all of whom consider schools as institutions that reproduce class hierarchies and inequalities.

This cultural capital is used as a mechanism to filter pupils to particular positions within the hierarchy of capitalist society. Schools recreate the social and economic hierarchies in the way that they are embedded, using the processes of selection and teaching, judging and comparing performance in these activities against the *habitus* of the middle class, and thus effectively discriminating against all those students who do not have access to this. Dale *et al* summarize Bourdieu's arguments thus: 'By taking all children as equal, while implicitly favoring those who have already acquired the linguistic and cultural competencies to handle a middle class culture, schools take as natural what is essentially a social gift, i.e. cultural capital' (Dale, Esland & MacDonald, 1976, p.4). (Ross, Dooly & Hartsmar, 2012, p. 8)

Arguably, students are implicitly and explicitly aware of these discriminatory practices and make decisions to invest or resist institutionalized school practices based on these power inequalities. In China, these inequalities are evident in the question of foreign language acquisition. It is hoped to illustrate the relationship among English acquisition, cultural, economic and social capital, that is, the economic and social capital one student has can affect the extent to which the foreign language converts into cultural capital for them.

This study can potentially contribute to the field of English education in China. The experience obtained from participants from various educational backgrounds may help to raise awareness and sensitivity among educators, administrators, and other interested readers. Under the mainstream discourse that English is a 'gold key' to open doors for gaining economic and social capital for people who master it, a different voice is heard. For the students from rural regions and who work in the small

cities or under-developed areas, although they firstly held a firm belief that English was a valuable form of cultural capital and invested much in English learning, it seems all of their efforts are in vain in reality. Being enslaved in a situation of limited social and economic capital, the conversion of English into cultural capital, which could bring about social and economic capital, was limited. Furthermore, it reinforced the relationships among these three forms of capital and the necessary conditions for converting from one form of capital to another form. Insights from the participants' experience might motivate educators to find ways to assist these students during their journey of aspiring for higher education and personal proposed development.

2.4 The structure of dissertation

The whole dissertation is divided into ten parts. The first part, as the reader has seen, is the introduction. In this chapter, I described the social and personal rationale for this study. And then, I introduced the phenomenon of English as a global language. Next I introduced the history of English language learning and current context related to English language leaning in China, such as current English language education system and public concern. Lastly, I introduced the location and situation of English learning of the research-setting school and the gap between urban and rural regions in English language education.

In this second chapter, I have focused on my research questions and research significance. The process of how I determined my driving question as well as my research questions was presented to readers. Lastly, I presented the significance of this study.

The third chapter is the literature review, which consists of two parts. In the first section, I present the crucial concepts of the study. An overview of the theoretical framework that informed my thinking and understanding of capital, investment and

identity in English language learning is provided. In the second part, I explain more detail the current research literature in relation to this study. I review relevant literature and explore the emerging attention to the ideas related to English language learning as a kind of capital, and investment made in English learning in relation to the change of identity with time and space.

Chapter four is dedicated to the detailed description of the methodology employed in this study, which is qualitative. Creswell stated that a qualitative research is inquiry based and that it employs a holistic approach in exploring human and social problems (Creswell, 1998). As with any qualitative research, this study focuses on assumptions that arise from interpreting human experiences and stories within their context (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Merriam, 1998). During data collection, the participants' journey, their personal experiences and stories are gathered and form the basis of the specific method used: narrative inquiry. The reasons for choosing narrative inquiry as the frame for this study are explained in more detail in chapter three. This is followed by a record of the trajectory of the data collection process as well as a detailed description of the participants and the context. The next step is to outline how the data is analyzed through narrative inquiry. Finally, the limitations of the study are discussed.

Chapters five, six, seven and eight outline the data analysis. In these chapters, detailed descriptions and contextual information framing the analysis for the four participants who I focus on in this thesis are presented. On initiating my study, I selected ten participants in total in 2013. Five of them were in secondary school at that time, at the school where I had worked as an English teacher. The other five were college students at that time who used to be my students and had graduated from the same secondary school. Four of the participants' experience of English learning has been selected for in depth analysis in this thesis as a representation of the commonalities across my

participants. In these four chapters, I navigate responses to my central research question: to what extent students in rural China perceive learning English as a valuable form of cultural, social and/or economic capital which will impact their current or future achievements. I do this by reconstructing four participants' stories.

Chapter 9 is about some related results mainly from the data Focus Group Discussion. The results are the participants' comments on the current English teaching methods. It can be considered as an important factor which affects the participants English learning. However, it is not the main theme of this thesis, so I construct this part as related results.

Finally, chapter 10 presents my conclusions. In this section, I summarize the main findings from four participants and seek to analyze the reasons for their investment in English language learning in relation to both external and individual factors. I connect the participants' English learning experiences with the key notions in my study: investment and identity. I summarize my analysis of their English learning trajectories through the lens of their investment and their identities changing across space and time. Furthermore, I discuss some pedagogical implication of the study, which I hope may offer help for English teachers, policy makers and other interested researchers.

Chapter 3. Literature review

This chapter provides a systematic review of the related social and educational theories pertinent to the study. The chapter outlines concepts and theories which have had an impact on the past research and theoretical positionings concerning the relationship between language learning, different forms of capital, learners' identity and investment; all of which are the main notions that provide the theoretical pillars of this thesis.

3.1 Capital

As has already been discussed, Chinese society has experienced a huge and obvious rural-urban class division in many aspects.

Rural–urban differences in China have persistently accounted for a large share of income inequality. In part, today's rural–urban gap reflects the institutional legacies of socialism. Beginning in the 1950s, Communist Party leaders clearly separated urban and rural residents through a strictly enforced residential permit (*hukou*) system (...). However, in order to subsidize rapid industrialization, the planning system set prices and directed investments in a manner that discriminated against agriculture and rural areas, leading to sharp differences in the living standards of urban and rural residents. (Park, 2008, p. 41)

Within this context, Pierre Bourdieu' idea of capital, especially that of social capital, can explain why English as a Foreign Language (EFL) holds such a predominant role in Chinese education. Understandings of Bourdieu's different forms of capital have been applied to other studies related to language learning (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene, 2005; Symeou, 2007). In a study on Mandarin-speaking young English learners in the USA, Jiang (2009) outlines the link

between language learning and other types of capital, in particular symbolic capital.

According to Bourdieu (1986), existing in its material and immaterial forms, capital is used to produce and reproduce benefit through transactions. Defined as “the mastery and relation to language” (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 114), linguistic capital represents the status, power, and benefit brought by the quality command of language(s). Bourdieu (1991) claimed that language is “symbolic capital” that producers use “to maximize the symbolic profit” that can be gained in linguistic practices. (Jiang, 2009, p. 1)

Following the lines of Monkman, Ronald, and Theramene (2005), Jiang (2009) maintains that linguistic abilities can be seen as cultural resources and that these resources “may be transformed into a type of cultural capital. In other words, material and immaterial benefits may be gained through linguistic proficiency” (p. 1). The ways in which the terms are defined by Bourdieu are outlined in more detail in the following section.

3.1.1 Three forms of capital

The term ‘capital’ can be applied to both material and symbolic resources. Bourdieu (1986) posited that capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in forms such as property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in forms such as educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations (‘connections’), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in forms such as a title of nobility (Bourdieu, 1986). It is not always easily apparent what the differences between these different capitals are as they are often intertwined, exchanged or overlap one another in everyday human interaction and transactions. We shall attempt to gloss these terms further: Economic capital, as the term itself implies, refers to monetary income,

although it can also refer to other financial resources, both tangible and intangible. Sometimes economic capital (e.g. in a capitalist society) is institutionalized as property rights under individual control.

Cultural capital is something that one can acquire through ‘preparation’ by ‘equipping oneself’ as well as through sustained exposure to certain ‘habitus’. It is often reproduced by economic capital. The term mainly refers to forms of knowledge, skills, education, and related advantages that a person possesses, which can offer them a higher social status in society. It also refers to ‘ways of being’ in the sense of mannerisms, or how one dresses, talks, or generally carries oneself in different situations. Normally, cultural capital is not used directly to make money and it may take various forms: embodied, objectified, and institutionalized (Bourdieu, 1986, p47).

Embodied cultural capital contains both the conscious acquirement and passively gained properties of a person. Embodied cultural capital cannot be transmitted by generations, rather, it is acquired over time and it imprints itself upon one’s social habitus, which refers to one’s character, one’s way of thinking and being. For instance, speaking Mandarin with a rural accent can be considered an example of embodied cultural capital, while owning luxury items is an example of objectified cultural capital (China is currently the worldwide consumer of luxury goods). Holding a university degree that includes English language learning maybe seen as an institutionalized form of cultural capital, as this is directly related to official accreditation and cultural competence and authority.

Of course, cultural capital is not ‘transacted’ in the same way as economic capital. A business degree at a prestigious university is not directly ‘exchanged’ for a luxury car, but the eventual outcome for an individual with this degree may be the luxury car. Furthermore, cultural capital includes long-standing dispositions (habitus) acquired

during the socialization process, the accumulation of valued cultural objects such as paintings, and formal educational qualifications and training (Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995).

Within this definition, it is clear that cultural capital is highly symbolic and yet can have tangible effects. Shared cultural capital (similar tastes in art, frequenting the same holiday resorts, attending the same meetings) can help create a collective identity. The flip side is exclusion from cultural capital, resulting in a source of social inequality, as some forms of cultural capital may be valued over others in different social situations. In short, cultural capital may be a resource or an obstacle to social inclusion and mobility, arguably as much as income or other economic capital.

Lareau and Weininger are inclined to expand the definition of cultural capital which allows culture to be seen as a resource that provides access to difficult-to-obtain rewards, is subject to monopolization, and, under certain conditions, may be transmitted from one generation to the next (Lareau & Weininger 2003). In summary, it refers to various forms of 'habitus', knowledge, skills, education and other advantages that can offer high/er social status.

In China, English language acquisition can be considered a cultural capital although it should be noted that only the acquisition and subsequent accreditation of that acquisition offers high/er social status for the learner, so only then can it be regarded as cultural capital. That is a vital factor for the participants' perspectives of English as cultural capital in this study.

In the context of education, the most significant cultural capital is 'institutionalized' cultural capital, referring to qualifications, knowledge, skills, language acquisitions, institutionalized credentials and symbols, all of which are highly valued to identify one's social and cultural background in society. Lareau and Weininger develop an

alternative interpretation of cultural capital in educational research that does not restrict its scope exclusively to 'elite status cultures', and that does not attempt to partition it - analytically or empirically - from 'human capital' or 'technical' skill. Their approach stresses the importance of understanding, on the individual level, the micro-interactional processes, whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence come into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation (Lareau & Weininger, 2003). This provides a different perspective from only the 'macro-level' vision of cultural capital. In the case of this study, we can see how the participants from college value the certificates of English, based on their belief that the qualification will secure prestige and advantage in the competitive labor market. Social capital is the sum of the actual as well as potential resources that can be mobilized or used to advantage oneself through membership in social networks or social connections and organizations.

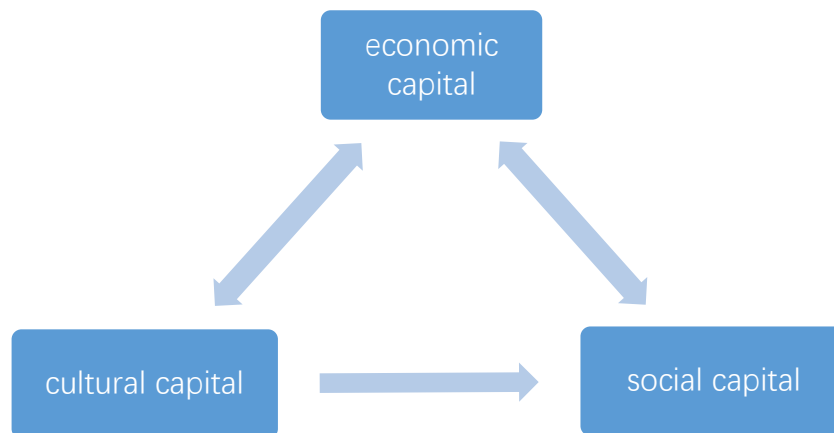
In other words, the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long-term, i.e., at transforming contingent relations, such as those of neighborhood, the workplace, or even kinship, into relationships that are at once necessary and elective, implying durable obligations subjectively felt (feelings of gratitude, respect, friendship, etc.) or institutionally guaranteed (rights). (Bourdieu, 1986, p.52)

One's social capital is determined to a large extent by his/her social class. Through membership of a given social group, individuals gain access to and claim the resources that are being circulated in this social group (including related cultural capital). Simplifying greatly, social capital is related to whom one might know and cultural capital is what one might know.

“These forms of capital share common features, including the capacity to be converted into other resources and material profits” (Martin & Spenner, 2009, p. 625). Bourdieu himself mentioned cultural capital is related to economic capital to some extent.

The notion of cultural capital initially presented itself to me, in the course of research, as a theoretical hypothesis which made it possible to explain the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 243).

Figure 6. Types of capital



While social class is an amorphous term, it can generally be defined as an unofficial hierarchical stratification of people in a given society, who are ranked according to their social, economic, occupational, and educational statuses (Vardrik, 2014). However, as Kubota (2003) and others have cautioned, class is often a shifting rather than fixed identity. There is a body of scholarship about the link between social class, social capital and education. A major emphasis in this field of study is the concept of social reproduction. Persell (1997) argues that “social class has been consistently

related to educational success through time” (p. 88). According to Anyon (1981), social class differences in education are “an important aspect of the reproduction of unequal class structures” (p. 3). In her study of five elementary schools from various social settings Anyon (1981) found “subtle as well as dramatic differences in the curriculum (...) among the schools” (p. 3). Luke (2010) asserts that the implications of Anyon’s compelling research data are still applicable today. Moreover, this assertion is reinforced by research in higher education as well, Clark (2010) illustrates that affluent students occupy an even larger proportion of U.S. students earning bachelor’s degrees than they did in the past.

Anyon (2005) said, “We have long known that social class, or socioeconomic status (SES), is highly correlated with educational achievement” (p. 65). The person’s social network is likely to provide him more opportunities which helps to obtain economic capital. Many people try their best to make social mobility to maintain and enhance their social position by converting these resources into other forms of capital and tangible advantages. Equally, sufficient economic capital is helpful to the person to establish connections with the people in the same class and have more powerful social status. For the participants in this study, the original motivation of their English learning was to acquire cultural capital which can bring economic as well as social capital for them, as many of them do not begin with high levels of economic or social capital (they come from rural, peasant families).

While it is very difficult to convert social into cultural capital, the transformation of cultural into social capital is easier (Anheier, Gerhards & Romo, 1995).

In terms of social class in China, a rapid economic development and dramatic social reform has happened since 1978. Simultaneously, increasing socioeconomic disparity has become a problem that could potentially destabilize the economic reform, and the existing rigid social-status hierarchy that grew out of a state socialist economy is no

longer suited to represent the increasing social and economic fragmentation of Chinese society (Bian, 2002). In order to solve this problem, the Chinese Government carefully monitors social inequality in order to continue economic growth and develop a 'harmonious society'. Subsequently, the term social strata has replaced social class, as defined by Marxist class analysis. It has been introduced as a new expression to study China's changing social structure in the 1990s (Anagnost, 2008). The concept of social strata is used to address social inequality without assuming social antagonism. In this way, socioeconomic inequality is articulated as cultural difference in a hierarchy of nationalistic belonging rather than class-based conflict (Anagnost, 2008).

Applying this term to the context of this study, the contradiction and conflict among different social strata are still very salient in China. The complexly differentiated social strata inspire individual Chinese to pursue their self-interests and climb the social ladder, which fits the market reforms in China (Liang, 1997). In accordance with the idea of social reproduction, people from different social strata have different access to social capital. In this study, nine of the participants are from working class or peasant family and one of them is from a civil service family. As a result, the serious differences between their social status serve a decisive role in the process of English learning and the investment in it.

In Chinese, the term of *guanxi* (关系 in Chinese), a principle concept in Chinese society, is closely equal to the conception of social capital. *Guanxi*, whose literal meaning is "connections" or "relationships", has an actual meaning far beyond this, as sometimes relationships are not necessary to produce *guanxi*. *Guanxi* refers to "a dyadic, particular and sentimental tie that has the potential of facilitating favor exchanges between the parties connected by tie" (Bian, 2006, p.312). In other words, it can be seen as a form of social investment or social capital (Butterfield, 1983) and it creates a culture of connections and provides the individual with easy access to specific resources, increased access to controlled information, credit grants and

protection from external competitors (Lee, Pae & Wong, 2001).

A great number of Chinese people value the importance of *guanxi*. The important role of *guanxi* is highlighted in the Chinese expression, ‘one more connection offers one more road to take’. *Guanxi* is “the informal connections so essential to gaining approval for or access to just about everything in China” (Tsang, 1998, p.64). In the context of English learning, *guanxi* plays an important part for the participants in their school as well as class choice which affect the investment of their English learning.

3.1.2 Second language acquisition and cultural capital

In the book by Bourdieu entitled *Language and symbolic power* (1991), cultural capital is defined as knowledge, skills and other cultural acquisitions, as exemplified by educational or technical qualifications. And it is defined in the educational research literature as that which is gained through knowledge-based skills and strategies that can be used to negotiate one's position within a desired socioeconomic field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977/1990; Wacquant, 1989). In Bourdieu's writings, cultural capital is associated with “subtle modalities in the relationship to culture and language [such] as affluence, elegance... or distinction”. So linguistic capital, defined as the mastery of and relation to language (Bourdieu, 1990, p.114), can be understood as a form of embodied capital as it represents a means of communication and self-expression in a linguistic community. It is acquired or inherited as well as accumulated over time and affected by the surrounding environment. As Bourdieu (1990) asserts, language is not merely a method of communication, but also a mechanism of power. Different usages of language tend to reinforce the respective positions of each participant in a given community or surroundings. Linguistic interactions can be seen as manifestations of the participants’ respective positions in social field and thus would reproduce the objective structures of the social status.

For the Chinese students, especially the ones from rural regions, who participated in

this study, English acquisition seems to be considered as both linguistic capital and as a kind of cultural capital, given that English can help widen their understanding of the world and change their social identities. It also falls into the category of institutionalized cultural capital when some of participants graduated from college and began to hunt for a job.

This form of cultural capital usually holds a prominent role in the labor market, where cultural capital can be expressed in a single qualitative and quantitative measurement. Any given 'competence' functions as cultural capital if it enables appropriation "of the cultural heritage" of a society, but is unequally distributed among its members, thereby engendering the possibility of "exclusive advantages" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.56). Increasingly, scholars argue that English is not only an important academic subject in the exam-oriented educational system in China but is also a form of cultural capital in the globalized world, English learning is becoming a means of promoting social mobility (Butler, 2013; Zou & Zhang, 2011). As discussed in former section, most of the participants are from rural areas and have little capital so they are eager to gain economic profit as well as promote their social status through English acquisition.

3.1.3 Language(s) acquisition and social capital

In essence, learning is a social process, which means the process of learning is an interactive activity between an individual and his/her surrounding environment. Whether a language learner can learn well is influenced by his/her learning context. In an active and encouraged surrounding, the learner will be positive to learn and practice the language. Or else, it is very likely that they would keep silent. Firth and Wagner (2007), drawing on the works of Lave and Wenger (1991), regard the process of learning as an "inseparable part of ongoing activities, situated in social practice and social interaction" (ibid p.807). According to Firth and Wagner, the world is not simply found and discovered, but is constructed through the social interaction between the individual with his/her surroundings through various semiotic means,

mainly language.

Language acquisition for students, especially home language and literacy acquisition, to a large extent, is determined by parents' social class, both in content and in the way they speak (this is related to embodied cultural capital). Also, parents with distinct sociocultural backgrounds have different expectations and assumptions about their children's literacy learning. Moreover, parents' values and behaviors affect their choices as well as attitude for their children's language acquisition. Therefore, language acquisition is also affected by social capital to a certain extent. Social capital can result in inequalities in student academic achievement in language learning, as discussed earlier in this chapter (cf. Anyon, 1981, 2005). The participants in this study are from different social class and have distinct social capital, their English achievements are also different. Parents with sufficient social capital have the ability to offer extra opportunities and certain resources to their children for their English learning through their powerful positions in society, while parents without social capital fail to offer necessary access to the resources for their children.

Many researchers have argued that social and cultural capital are manifested in the ways language and literacy are taught and learned (Li, 2007; Luke & Carrington, 1997; Monkman, Ronald, & Theramene., 2005) and therefore these processes and results (language and literacy) can be understood as constituting forms of linguistic capital (Luke & Carrington, 1997), which can be reproduced and exchanged for other forms of capital. Liu (2012) examined factors that motivated middle school students from different social classes to learn English in China. Based on variability of parents' education, occupation, position and income, Liu grouped the students into 5 classes. His findings illustrated that the participants from upper-class and upper-middle class families had higher motivation to study abroad or to further personal development, as well as stronger intrinsic motivation to learn English, compared to the ones from the lower class. The investment in English education varied significantly across distinct

social classes. The parents from upper and upper-middle classes made more positive investment for their children's English education than the parents from the lower-class. With the growing social inequality in China, English education is increasingly becoming a site for the reproduction of social-class differences (Butler, 2013; Zou & Zhang, 2011).

In summary, social capital offers great help to explain the disparities of English acquisition among students from different social class. Students with richer and more solid accumulation of social capital are more likely to have better academic performance than the ones with less social capital. This is illustrated by the inequalities and differences in English learning between the participants from different social classes in this study.

The concept of social capital also serves as a significant indicator of quality family environment. The relationships and interactions between adults and their children and their social networks offer valuable resources for children's language learning at home. Social capital such as parents' participation in children's learning at home "facilitates and enhances the conversion of other forms of family capital into children's human capital" (Wong, 1998, p. 4).

Family and parents within their social networks, have emerged to be one of the most central social networks where the transmission of cultural capital takes place (Hao & Bonstead-Bruns, 1998; Reay, 2000). At the same time, it seems that parents with poor educational background may have equally high aspirations for their children's English learning as parents with higher education levels. However, their cultural, social and economic capital –often related to a lower education level- may restrict their involvement in language and literacy learning activities with their children at home (Purcell-Gates, 1995; Rogers, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Li, 2004). In terms of language learning, the resources in a given social network such as family may include

discursive resources (i.e. motivational and belief discourses in language learning), social resources (i.e. competent speakers of target languages) and material resources (i.e. books and other artefacts that support the learning of languages; Palfreyman, 2006). It is crucial for the participants to access these resources in their pursuit of language competence in their various contexts. This is particularly so for English learners on the Chinese mainland as a result of the growing public enthusiasm for learning English (Gao, 2008; 2010; Wang & Gao, 2008).

Besides the aspects discussed above, in the case of this study, the effect of social capital on the transformation of English to cultural capital is discussed and illustrated. As discussed in the definition of cultural capital, whether a skill, for instance, English acquisition, can be regarded as cultural capital, the vital factor is whether it can offer the learner a high/er social status. This process is closely related to one's social surroundings and communities. That is, it is influenced by a learner's social capital to main extent.

3.2 Identity

Norton first constructed the notion of identity of the language learner as a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures which are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction (Norton, 1995, p.13). She redefines identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2013, p.45). In this concept, the world mainly refers to an individual's surroundings and the relationship between he/she and others who have connection with him/her. That means identity has a close relationship to one's social capital. In this regard, the notion of ‘identity’ helps link Bourdieu's work on the distribution of capital in society and on how social inequalities are reproduced to research on second language learning by focusing on learners' social identities and their social positioning in terms of the

foreign language in order to explain their access, successes or failures (see also Moore, 2006), as well as their investment and/or motivation. The notion of identity serves as one of the key concepts in this study because all of the participants have complex identities which are, in a large part, determined by their social class, sometimes are contradictory, and are constantly changing across time and space. A number of researchers who are interested in the concept of identity in second language learning attach considerable attention to how relations of power in classrooms and communities of learners promote or constrain their language learning. As Block (2017) has noted (although discussing language teacher identities, I feel it is also pertinent to learner identity): identities “emerge from social milieu which are part of larger social structures constituting society at large” (p. 34).

Whether a learner speaks or is silent is determined mainly by the extent to which the learner is valued in given classrooms and communities, which can be influenced by the learner’s social status. Norton links notion of empowerment to identity. She states that the central interest to researchers of identity in second language learning is that the very articulation of power, identity, and resistance is expressed in and through language. Language is thus more than a system of signs; it is a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated (Norton, 2012). Language is formulated “not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated” (Norton, 2010, p. 351). Or, as Weedon (1987) explains “language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity is conducted.” (p21). This theory constructs a relation between social capital and identity in the field of language learning, that is, the language learner’s social capital offers the main characteristic of or opportunities for his/her identity.

Located in the broader context of second language learning, identity has been

regarded as a key element in understanding second language learning. Framing language learning as a social process inherently implies that learning a second language will often involve a struggle for participation in a new social environment (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). For the participants in this study, English learning is not simply a process of language learning but is also accompanied by a series of struggles to get access to a higher social class. Recent works on second language learning adopt the understanding of identities as fluid and context-dependent in certain historical and cultural circumstances. These researchers consider identity categories as socially and historically constructed processes determined by relations of power which are determined by one's social capital to a large extent. These affective descriptors of the notion of identity are usually constructed in inequitable social contexts, as well as variable across time and space, and sometimes they co-exist in contradictory ways within one single individual. In other words, identity is theorized as multiple, changing, and a site of struggle.

Many scholars (Ricento, 2005; Zuengler & Miller, 2006; Swain & Deters, 2007; Menard-Warwick, 2009) cite Norton's theorizing of identity (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) as central in framing contemporary understandings of identity and language learning. Associated with Weedon (1987) and Bourdieu (1991), the central point to Norton's theories of identity, is that identity is presented as multiple, a site of struggle, and subject to change. Of central interest are the ways in which language learners understand their relationship between their social world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the learner understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2000, p.5).

Whenever language learners interact in the second language, this interaction should be seen as a process in which they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation and it is illustrated by the English learning process of the participants in this study. They have strong desire to learn English well not only to convert English to a kind of

cultural capital but also re-construct their identities. Since identity is continuously and constantly produced and reproduced, sketched and designed, and often co-constructed by ‘self’ and ‘other’ interactively, researchers interested in understanding this process should strive to demonstrate how identities are (re)produced through language and (other media) and how they come into existence through social interaction (De Fina, Schiffrin & Banberg, 2006 p.22).

However, the process of second language learning is not entirely dependent on structural conditions and social contexts, since sometimes these conditions and contexts are produced by themselves partly. What’s more, it is very likely that language learners who struggle to speak from one identity position are able to reframe their relationship with their interlocutors in a community or classroom. Simultaneously, they can change their access to second language learning resources, gaining alternative identities. Hence, if learners succeed in getting more powerful identities, their language acquisition would also be enhanced at the same time. It is illustrated by one participant’s named Cherry’ (whose story is manifested in chapter 4). English learning experience. She is regarded as a popular girl because of her English competence and this promotes her English learning in return.

3.3 Motivation and investment

Motivation has long been recognized as one of the key factors that determine second language achievement for the learners. Motivation serves as the initial engine for stimulating second language learning and later plays a role as a continuous driving force which helps to maintain the long and laborious journey of second language acquisition. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) assert that it is fair to say that without sufficient motivation even the brightest learners are unlikely to persist long enough to attain any really useful language proficiency, whereas most learners with strong motivation can achieve a working knowledge of the L2, regardless of their language aptitude or any undesirable learning conditions. Motivation in second language

learning has been the subject of a considerable amount of research in recent decades, which aims to explore the nature of this complex construct and how it affects the process of second language learning. There are generally agreed two kinds of motivation: extrinsic or instrumental and intrinsic or integrative motivation, which were firstly developed by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Instrumental motivation refers the desire that language learners have to learn a second language for utilitarian purposes, such as employment, while integrative motivation refers the desire to learn a language to integrate successfully with the target language community. In the case of this study, the original motivation for the participants to learn English is to perceive English as a useful tool or a bridge: to go to a good college and gain a well-paid job through the English competence, which can be categorized into instrumental motivation.

Norton argues that definitions of language learner motivation (e.g. intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; integrative and instrumental motivation) in the field of second language learning do not fully capture the complex relationship between power, identity and language learning in her research about five immigrant women's experience of English learning in Canada. Norton's construct of 'investment', which complements constructs of motivation in SLA (Dornyei, 2001), is inspired by the work of Bourdieu (1991), and signals the historically and socially constructed relationship of learners to the language they are learning and their often ambivalent desire to learn and use it (Norton, 2012, p. 3). Kramsch (2013, p. 195) notes as follows:

Norton's notion of *investment* ...accentuates the role of human agency and identity in engaging with the task at hand, in accumulating economic and symbolic capital, in having stakes in the endeavor and in persevering in that endeavor.

Norton's perspective of investment aims to provide further insight into why and what prompts language learners to begin and to continue their language learning. While research on motivation tends to focus on psychological aspects of individual learners as autonomous and unitary subjects, investment highlights the ways in which relations are constructed by learners' social and historical context, between the learner and the language. These factors are intertwined with the learner's desire to use the language. By investing in second language learning, learners expect a return in the form of symbolic and material resources and an increase in their cultural capital (Norton Peirce, 1995). Norton (2000) states the difference between investment and instrumental motivation as follows:

The conception of instrumental motivation presupposes a unitary, fixed and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that the privilege of target language speakers. The notion of investment, on the other hand, conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity, and identity which is constantly changing across time and space. (Norton, 2000, p10)

Both concepts of motivation theorize about the processes of acquiring new skills or knowledge, nevertheless, only investment is based on specific identity negotiation and development, and pays attention to the relationship between the learners and target language speakers; as well as highlighting the fluidity of the entire language learning process. This is because investment targets a more complex and specific learning context than motivation does, especially in terms of 'class participation' or 'community involvement.' As a result, a learner is not simply invested or not invested,

but rather specifically invested “in the target language practices of [a given] classroom or community” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, pp. 75–76). If learners ‘invest’ in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital. While cognitive psychologists might ask, “To what extent is the learner motivated to learn the target language?” the social identity theorist asks, “What is the learner’s investment in the target language practices of this classroom?” For example, a student may be a highly *motivated* learner, but may not be *invested* in the language practices of a given classroom if the practices are racist, sexist, or homophobic. It can explain why a certain number of language learners “may be highly motivated language learners, but may nevertheless have little investment in the language practices of a given classroom” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 76). In this study, all of ten participants had strong desire to learn English, especially at the beginning of their learning. They made effect on English learning with confirm belief that English would increase their cultural capital which could bring economic and social capital in future. However, many of them did not invest in English learning because the given community had changed, although some of them still had high motivation to learn English. In other words, it is normal a learner “could be excluded from the language practices of a classroom, and in time positioned as a poor or unmotivated language learner” (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p. 76), even if he/she has high motivation.

As identity is fluid, multiple, and a site of struggle, how learners are able to invest in a target language is contingent on the dynamic negotiation of power in different fields, and thus investment is complex, contradictory, and in a state of flux (Norton, 2013; Norton Peirce, 1995). There may also be important discrepancies between a language learner’s conception of good teaching and the practices of a given classroom. Thus, despite being highly motivated, a learner could be excluded from the language practices of a classroom, or perhaps resist certain classroom practices, and in time be

positioned as a ‘poor’ or unmotivated language learner. The construct of investment has sparked considerable interest and been extended in the second language learning field (McKay & Wong, 1996; Skilton-Sylvester, 2002; Pittaway, 2004; Haneda, 2005; Cummins, 2006; Potowski, 2007; Arkoudis & Davison, 2008; Norton & Gao, 2008). Under these circumstances, all the participants’ English learning can be explained by their original motivation and then their investments which will occur across their constant changing identities across time and space as an individual’s identity is diverse, complex and structured in the social environment. Different identity constructions determine whether a learner invests –and sustains this investment- in English learning and how. Likewise, their identities will change across time and are relative to the surrounding language community, which, in turn, leads to possible changes in their motivation and investment.

Thus, following a recently proposed model by Darwin and Norton (2015), the analysis aims to understand the participants’ “investment” in terms of capital and intersubjective positioning of their learning environment(s) as well as their professional environments, in conjunction with their understanding of systems of power (e.g. Chinese education policies, Chinese government dictates, etc.).

In this model, learners invest in particular practices not only because they desire specific material or symbolic benefits, but also because they recognize that the capital they possess can serve as affordances to their learning. The valuing of their capital is an affirmation of their identity, a legitimation of their rightful place in different learning contexts. At the same time, because of the pull of ideology, the capital they possess may not be accorded symbolic value by structures of power, or the capital they desire becomes difficult to attain because of systemic patterns of control (Darwin & Norton, 2015, p. 46).

This type of analysis highlights the complexity of interconnections between the

learner and the social world (with special emphasis on the learner identity) based on perspectives of language acquisition as a complex system (Larsen-Freeman, 1997) or as van Lier (2000) sees it, an ‘ecological’ phenomenon. Taking an ecological perspective implies “exploring the deep script of human interaction with the learning process, not in isolation, but within the broader context of students’ concerns, attitudes and perceptions (Tudor, 2003, p. 10). This shifts the focus of language learning towards acquiring a ‘named’ language (cf. Otheguy, 2016) to the notion of acquiring a semiotic social practice.

The notion of ‘ecology’ introduced here includes a concept of affordance – first introduced by the psychologist Gibson (1986) while discussing visual perception. For Gibson there is a direct relationship between environment and animal (or man). The environment provides affordances that can be modified in different ways (e.g. the cutting of trees to create a pathway). This notion of affordance has been brought into play concerning language learning by van Lier (2000, 2004), emphasizing the ideas of possibilities that may come into play during interaction; affordance in language learning “is action in potential and it emerges as we interact with the physical and social world (van Lier, 2004, p. 92). Importantly, in the theory promoted by van Lier affordance is neither seen as a property of the environment nor of the individual, rather it emerges from the interaction between the two. It is acknowledged, however, that the nature of this study does not allow for a full implementation of the framework for research as suggested by van Lier (2004). This author suggests

that research from an ecological perspective should (1) be contextualized, focusing on the relationships within a particular environment as well as the participants’ relationship to the environment; (2) consider factors of space and time; (3) have at least the potential to be interventionist; and (4) be ecologically and phenomenologically valid, by adopting an emic perspective in which the analytical notions and constructs used in the inquiry are compatible with those

used by the participants. (Murray & Fujishima, 2013, p. 142)

Due to the nature of the data compilation, point three is not feasible for this research. Furthermore, while the study adopts an emic approach, it does not aim to be a study of interaction, given that observation of the actual classroom or working places of the informants was not a possibility.

As Menezes (2011) explains, each individual has different perceptions of the world and the way in which the individual interacts with the environment will result in social practices (Menezes provides an example of how artists may perceive possibilities in rubbish that allows them to transform it into art). Similarly, the language learner will have different perceptions of their own experiences and the resources around them and their interaction with these will result in different language development. The notion of affordances, as understood from an ecological perspective, is a key notion for understanding how the learners position themselves in relation to English as a Foreign Language at different moments in their narrated lives.

As it has already been pointed out, an approach to understanding a language learners' perceptions towards the 'affordances' of that language (perceived benefits, cf. Darwin & Norton, 2015; potential opportunities, cf. van Lier, 2004) is closely tied to the interaction between the individual and the 'ecology' (Menezes, 2011). However, it is important to underscore that the interaction should be seen as mutually reciprocating vectors. The individual's perceptions of affordances are not drawn from a vacuum; individual assumptions of perceived benefits are based on both material and immaterial forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986); including (symbolic) 'linguistic capital'. The 'symbolic' linguistic capital comes into being through "socially and politically defined boundaries of named (and usually national and state) languages" (Otheguy, García & Reid, 2015, p. 281); or, in this case of Chinese-backed foreign language instruction, it emerges as an affordance in service to the production of human capital

(see Block, Gray & Holborrow, 2012). It has long been recognized that schools (practices and policies) are an important nexus between individual and society and often operate as means of social reproduction (Bowles & Gintis, 1976).

Chapter 4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The issue of research methodology is very significant to any study as it is the cohesive body of knowledge that enables researchers to explain and analyze their methods applied to their research. According to Guba (1990), research paradigms are characterized by their ontology (understanding of what is reality); their epistemology (underlying notion of how one knows something) and their methodology (approach to exploring data or finding out knowledge). An overview of methodology helps researchers (and their audience) identify presuppositions and consequences connected to the approach undertaken in the study and to relate their potentialities to other research advances (Miller, 1983). The ontology and epistemology have been outlined in the previous chapters, this chapter will focus on methodology.

Based on the research questions and in order to explain the participants' investment during their process of English learning, as influenced by the learners' social capital and their changing identity across time and space, narrative inquiry is employed as the methodological (and as a theoretical framework) in this research. Narrative inquiry has roots in the works of Dewey (1938) who believed that personal experience is closely connected to education. This type of inquiry is not only about telling stories; it is a qualitative methodology that refers to understanding one's experience narratively. It is a way to understand and inquire into experience through "collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 20). Narrative is a way of expressing the meanings and connotations of the story since it highlights the storyteller's experience, based on his/her complicated historical and social context. Researchers have to 'create' and analyze these stories. It is not just simply narrating what happened according to the change of time and space, but about selecting and reconstructing meaningful stories based on the storyteller's personal experience to

readers. Narrative should start by learning ‘through stories’, by looking at how experiences are recorded and transmitted in story form. In short, researchers read storied lives on storied landscapes (Bateson, 1994).

4.2 Research methods

As a method of research, narratives aim to establish certain connections between lived experience and meanings of real events. For investigators who are interested in education processes, narratives are helpful to understand the reality and establish the bridge among these experiences with corresponding educational theories and practices. It is also an entry into a deeper understanding of how the individuals in the study perceive their ‘niche’ (Menezes, 2011) within the changing ‘ecology’ and their affordances (Gibson, 1986; Tudor, 2003; van Lier, 2004, 2008, 2010) of language learning and language use – whether that is in the classroom, outside the class, following graduation or in their jobs.

Narrative inquiry is based on the social theory that one’s life story is a social construct made up of both social reality and a personal, experiential world (Rosenthal, 1993). People shape their daily lives by a series of stories. Through these stories, individuals construct their identities and the identities of others around them while interpreting their understanding of past, present and future, in terms of their stories.

Narrative inquiry is an investigative approach that regards personal experience as a story; the story is a primal and vital way of analyzing experiences. To use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as a phenomenon under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 375). Summarizing the basic steps of this methodology: 1) the researcher compiles data from the participants in the study; 2) transcribes the stories; 3) reads through the stories with the research questions in mind (taking notes during the revision); 5) (re)creates the stories (narrating them while respecting the ‘voice’ of the participant. This may involve using first person, past tense, chronological order, describing plot, scenes, character, etc.; 6) if possible, the

researcher can check with the participants to compare their understandings of the narratives; 7) the narratives are revised and themes relative to the research questions are highlighted; 8) themes are collected, categorized and coded; 9) categories and codes are revised with the research supervisor (this might be done as well with others, such as members of a research group); 10) the combination of categories inherent in each individual story are developed into a typology. It is important that narrative researchers go beyond providing an interpretation or a simple summary of what the story says (see Chase, 2008; Conle, 2000; Connelly & Clandinin, (1990).

So, in summary, from my data collection, the participants' personal experience was compiled, next I 'recreated' their stories through narrative inquiry as a means of understanding their experiences. It has been a collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction. It is a depiction of milieus creating through a process where researcher and participants collaborate and make dialogues together (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). These stories were then analyzed to help shed light on the ways in which the subjects in the study experienced their language learning and target language use, in terms of their intersubjective positionings towards the 'niche' of the language community and the perceived 'affordances' of that community (often 'imagined community' in cases where there was little possibility of actual use; cf. Norton, 2001).

4.3 Participants

The study includes two groups of students as participants.

Group 1: Five secondary school students (all these five participants have graduated from the secondary school and gone to senior high school after September of 2015). All their English grades are above average and they pay considerable attention to their English learning.

Group 2: Five college students who graduated from the same secondary school and

went on to continue their studies at university level (all of these five participants have graduated from college after July of 2015). These participants have learning experiences both in secondary school and college. Because of this it can be theorized that they may have more intensive feelings about the impact of potential capital gained through English.

In total, ten participants were selected. I knew all of the participants prior to the research because I used to be their English teacher in China. I know each of them well and I am familiar with their English learning situation.

Table 2. Participants' information

| group | name | gender | birth of year | family background |
|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------------|---|
| 1 | Cherry | F | 2000 | officer's family |
| 1 | Wang | F | 2000 | working class |
| 1 | Young | F | 2000 | working class |
| 1 | Eason | M | 1999 | working class |
| 1 | Wu | M | 2000 | working class |
| 2 | Lily | F | 1994 | working class |
| 2 | Ding | M | 1993 | peasant family |
| 2 | Serena | F | 1994 | working class(left-behind child) |
| 2 | Lee | M | 1993 | working class |
| 2 | Linda | F | 1993 | working class |

Note: The participants in blue are the examples shown in chapter 5-8.

The reasons for choosing these students are as follows: English is a compulsory subject for secondary school students in most areas of China. For these students, the

acquisition of English can offer important access, resources and opportunities when they attend the *gaokao*. In China, with its history of a meritocracy-based imperial examination system, education has been held in high esteem as a means of promoting social mobility (Cheng, 2010). Entering a good college is often viewed as a kind of cultural capital that may bring social and economic capitals, as I presented in the previous chapters. English plays an important role for these students, making them important for this study.

Secondly, important to this study (as evidenced by the research questions), after the students go to college, their views about English acquisition may change due to their majors. This is especially true during the process of hunting for a job, as English can increase their opportunity for entry into the job market, thereby influencing the views, values and beliefs these students hold concerning English acquisition. After their graduation from college, all the participants face the challenge of huge changes in their identities, going from a student to a worker, which, arguably can have a very important impact on their investment in English learning. It could also have an impact on their perceptions concerning the benefits of (English) language knowledge (its affordances) as the affordances are closely tied to the individual-environment interaction (known in SLA literature as ‘ecology’ or ‘niche’; cf. Tudor, 2003; van Lier, 2004, 2008, 2010; Menezes, 2011).

4.4 Data collection and procedures

In the process of collecting the data, interviews (online) and focus group discussions (face-to-face) were employed to record the experiences of the ten participants (these are discussed in more detail in the sections below). In term of places, the data collections were compiled in Spain and China. In both of the data collection instruments, a narrative interview method is applied to collect the participants’ retrospective accounts of their English learning experiences. The interview was semi-structured and began with the questions ‘When did you begin to learn English?’ and ‘What were the principal reasons for your English learning?’ The participants

were encouraged to share freely their experiences in the interviews. All the interviews are conducted in Chinese, the participants' first language.

4.4.1 Data collection in Spain

My way of entering the inquiry field was through what is known as informal access. Researchers can get in touch with participants through teachers, friends, classmates and relatives and other similar types of personal relations. The advantage of this process is that the researchers can become involved in the community and school quickly, and they can carry out a detailed and deep investigation. This also affords the trust and collaboration from participants, which is propitious to the investigation. My decision for adopting this method was based on the fact that I used to be the English teacher of the participants in the study and it was easy for me to get in touch with them and gain their permission. I have had contact with the students through QQ since March of 2013 and telephoned periodically in order to track changes over time (QQ is an instant messaging software service developed by Tencent Holdings Limited in China.). The online interviews involved the researcher in Spain and the ten study participants in China. They began in the Spring of 2013 and were completed in the Autumn of 2015 when the five participants from secondary school graduated and the five participants from college began to hunt for a job. Online interviews were conducted whenever possible and insured that the conversations were friendly and non-hostile. For the online interviews, the unstructured interviewing format was applied thus gaining open-ended responses. Fontana and Frey (2003) state that unstructured interviewing “attempts to understand the complex behavior of members of society without imposing *a priori* categorization that may limit the field of inquiry” (p. 75).

The conversations focused upon many topics including their current English learning, their expectations of English acquisition in the future, their anxiety and difficulty of English learning and so on. The participants were allowed to frame their responses as

they wished. The interviews were carried out over approximately two and a half years, resulting in a large data corpus of texts chat of ten participants. The data corpus from online interviews are approximately fifty texts for each participant.

From the beginning, I let the participants know that they could discuss anything about their lives that they wanted. Through the informally structured online chats, information related to the participants' families and schools was gained. Sometimes the participants wanted to talk about their personal feelings, for example, their hopes and dreams, or to comment on their teachers and schools and even their friendship problems. At times, some structured questions were asked; for instance, I asked about their feelings regarding the learning of English, such as: if they liked learning English; did they realize the importance of learning English; did they make investment in their English learning and, if so, what kind of investment; what is the attitude of parents about their English learning; what is the situation with their parents' English acquisition? All this information reflects the backgrounds of the participants, which is very important to the research. All the texts chats were in Chinese and were saved as text files after the conversations.

4.4.2 Data collection in China

For two months, during the period from December 2013 to January 2014, I returned to China to collect data through interviews and focus group discussions. The participants consisted of the same two groups, made up of five secondary school students and five college students who had graduated from the same secondary school.

For this phase of the study, I applied both a formal and informal approach to collect data because permission was necessary. I requested and gained permission to conduct the study verbally from the Board of Education of the local government. Following this, I sent a letter to the Board of Education requesting permission to access the school. For the participants, because all of them used to be my students and got along

well with me for a long time, I told them my research questions, then discussed and negotiated a research plan with them. They agreed to cooperate with me for my study. The main purpose was to establish a preliminary contact with the school and get them interested in the current study. The merits of this process are that the permission and support of local government was granted and access to some related materials could be gained more easily.

Participation in the study was strictly on a volunteer basis. Dates and times for the interviews were scheduled with each volunteer participant based on their suggestions. Participants were requested to sign consent forms granting permission to use the confidential results from the analysis. Participants were informed about the research project before asking for permission. All the participants in the study have been given pseudonyms in order to protect their privacy.

4.4.2.1 Face-to-face interviews

Fontana and Frey (2003) state that “interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering but active interactions between two (or more) people leading to negotiated contextually based results” (p. 62). Bearing in mind that the interviews evolved from the previous online discussion, then, face-to-face interviews were conducted between November and December of 2013, upon my return visit to China. All of the ten participants were interviewed one time. The interviews were conducted after school in my room or in a pastry shop where the environment was friendly and relaxing. Each conversation took approximately one hundred and twenty minutes. Due to the former online interview, all participants understood clearly the research questions thus the semi-structured interview format was employed which, as Wolcott (1994) emphasizes, means that the questions revolved around a “broadly defined problem” (p. 407). In this case, the broadly defined problem was to fully understand to what extent the participants perceived English as a valuable form of capital that would provide affordances for their current or future achievements as well as what major factors

impact their English learning. The participants were encouraged to talk about these through open-ended questions and to express themselves as freely as possible. If necessary, a more direct question was made to make sure the question had been totally understood.

Most qualitative research endeavors to pay attention to the question of “*what?*” Knowing *what* means a conceptualization of the matter under investigation integrally from its various distinct parts, the way in which these parts are connected and organized as a whole, and the similarities and differences between the whole and other things. Thus, the focus of the interviews was related to the activities and attitudes of their English learning experience, that is, the “*what*” of the entire process. The face-to-face interviews were audio-recorded and saved after the interview.

The face-to-face interviews, like the online chats, were done in Chinese because the use of their participants’ first language helped ensure solidarity between the participants and the researcher and they could describe their experiences more freely. As a result, the use of Chinese in the interviews appeared to make the most sense and be more socially appropriate as well.

Before and during the interview, all participants were aware of my identity as a researcher and as their former English teacher. They were very curious about my English learning experience, especially the participants in secondary school and they often turned to me to help them solve some difficulties in the process of their English learning. All of these types of experience helped me gain insight into their real feelings and ‘stories’.

During the interview process, what was kept in mind is that the participant’s perspective on the question was more important than my own supposed view. It is vital to convey to the participant that her views are valuable and useful (Marshall &

Rossmann, 1999). As these authors point out, the researcher needs to ‘find’ not ‘prove’ the inner meaning of the story instead of making assumptions about the participants’ responses to the questions about their lives and experience.

4.4.2.2 Focus group discussion

Focus group discussions were originally called ‘focused interviews’ or ‘group depth interviews’. I adopted this method as a supplementary way to collect data for questions of reliability. The technique was developed after World War II to evaluate audience response to radio programs (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), focus group interviews should involve a small, homogeneous group gathered to obtain a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concern, new product program, or idea. It is a type of group interviewing through guided questions: questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to answer and talk with other group members. The focus group interview usually consists of, minimum three and up to twelve people depending on the objectives of the research (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990).

For this study, I guided the group discussion between the participants as a moderator (or group facilitator) by introducing topics for discussion and helping the group to participate in a lively and natural discussion. Usually, focus group interviews take between 30 to 90 minutes. The course of the discussion is planned in advance, and in the case of this study, my guidance was sometimes necessary for the participants so that the discussion did not deviate from my research questions and all the topics of interest were covered.

The focus group discussion was conducted as supplementary resources for the interviews since some of participants might not have expressed their feelings accurately because of uncertain factors such as timing and shyness. The group was made up of three secondary students and three college students. All of the members

had participated in the online interviews.

Carspecken (1996) argues that researcher-facilitated focus group discussions stimulate the production of 'dialogical' data. All participants are offered chances to make their voice heard about their feelings, personal experience and life. In order to ensure that the participants felt they had a voice, it was made clear to them that they were taken seriously. To do this, I took on the role of a facilitator and worked hard to construct a supportive and safe environment that could allow the participants to explore issues with their own vocabulary, metaphors, and ideas (Carspecken, 1996).

Focus group discussion sessions need to be prepared carefully by first identifying the main objective(s) of the meeting, then developing key/guide questions, developing an agenda and an inviting environment, and finally planning how to record all the conversations during the session as well. Based on the research questions, those questions were adopted as the guideline of their discussion.

1. Would you like to talk about your English learning experience so far?
2. What role do you think English plays in your current life? Why?
3. What role do you suppose English plays in your future? Why?
4. What factors do you think impact your English learning? How?
5. Have you ever invested in your English learning? What kind of investment have you made?

It should be noted that these questions were only used as general guiding questions, for the most part opportunities were given to the participants to speak about their feelings and thoughts freely and sometimes I would respond to them with some follow up questions in order to encourage them to express themselves completely. This is because the vital factor of these sessions is to facilitate dialogue among the participants. The facilitation process should ensure participation of each participant, by using careful wording of the guiding questions, maintaining a neutral and

supportive attitude and appearance to all responses, and summarizing the final session to reflect all of the viewpoints evenly and fairly.

Just as in face-to-face interviews, all conversations in the focus group discussions were recorded by auto-taped equipment with the permission of all the participants and audio files were saved once the discussions were finished. After each focus group was finished, I prepared a detailed report which noted and included all of my observations of each participant during the session. All the information was recorded by audio equipment, transcribed and then translated into English to add to the corpus as supplementary materials; following this the data were analyzed (the analytical procedure is discussed in the next section, the analysis and discussion of results will be given in the following chapters).

4.4.2.3 Triangulation of data

For the researcher, it is particularly crucial to check and validate the information received from various sources and examine it from different angles. In order to check the results, triangulation involved collecting the data through different methods and of different kinds in order to answer the research questions in the study. In my research, the data from on-line interviews, face-to-face interviews as well as the focus group discussion were compared to verify the research results, along with comparison to other literature and discussions with other researchers. The merit of triangulation is that it can make use of different resources to provide a more complete, holistic, and contextual portrait of the object for the study. With this triangulation technique, I was able to test my assertions on the whole set of data for corroboration or negation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In essence, triangulation was used to reduce the possibilities of misinterpretation. It helped me clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon could be seen (Denzin 1989; Flick 1992) and then narrowing down my results to significantly recurrent patterns.

4.5 Data analysis procedure

Following the compilation of raw data, the next phase consisted of the analysis. In this section, I will explain the procedures followed.

Step 1. Organizing the corpora

As I mentioned in the previous section, the text chats I collected from the on-line interviews were saved as text documents and the oral data from the face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were recorded and saved as audio files. These were subsequently reviewed and listened to several times.

Replaying the conversation after the session is often like listening to it for the first time: it is amazing how much the human ear and brain can miss and how the memory can distort. (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 91).

Thus I read and listened to all the data several times in order to first familiarize myself with the corpus and to identify the first initial extracts most related to my research questions (issues related to capital, topics linked to English).

As I have mentioned, I collected large amounts of data since there were initially ten participants, and the data of each participant includes interviews conducted on-line and face-to-face, as well as the focus group discussion. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to present every participant's 'story'. Selecting several representative 'stories' seemed more appropriate. For this reason, four participants from different family backgrounds were selected due to their commonalities with other participants to represent the main themes emerging across the data. They were Lily, who was the only one who perceived English as cultural capital; Serena, who was a 'left-behind' child; Ding, whose mother was disabled; and Cherry, who was the only one from the upper-class, as her parents were officers.

Usually multiple ways are employed to gather, compose and create field texts (data collection subsets) based on studying the experiences of the participants in a narrative inquiry. Field texts can include transcripts of conversations, field notes, family stories, memory box artifacts, photographs and other texts that are composed by narrative inquirers and participants to represent aspects of their lived experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2006). The former have been collected in this study. As well, field texts aid the inquirer to move back and forth between full involvement with participants and at the same time to gain distance from them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Step 2. Transcribing the stories

Transcribing is one of the basic steps before beginning the analysis of the research material and it is necessary phase for narrative inquiry. It was necessary to transcribe the oral chats. This was done originally in Chinese in broad transcription format (content of the conversations).

Step 3. Reading the field text corpus thoroughly

After completing the data collection stages and completing the transcriptions, I familiarized myself with the corpus again by reading the data carefully and researching the connections and meanings among the data. It was necessary to be completely familiar with all of the material before I began to analyze the data. During the reading, it was important that I ‘empty my mind’ of my own conceptualizations in order to let the data ‘speak to me’ without any barriers of preconceived notions or assumptions. This implies maintaining an open attitude towards the field text corpora without looking for personal explanations so the full significance of the field text corpora would be revealed naturally.

Step 4. Revising the research questions

During this process, some of original research questions needed revision and new research questions emerged, based on the data. For instance, it appeared that social capital played a more important role in the process of English learning for the participants than had been anticipated and that it had an impact on whether English can convert into a valuable form of cultural capital. Thus, a new research question focused on the effect of social capital was included. Moreover, it became clear that the participants' motivation shifted after they graduated and began to work. Thus, it was decided that an optimal way to approach their actions and attitudes towards English would be to employ the concept of 'investment', because their identities change across time and space. So, I added motivation and investment to my research questions to explain their effect on English learning. These changes helped me understand more clearly the way in which these young people in rural China constructed specific relationships with English language learning in relation to their perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital.

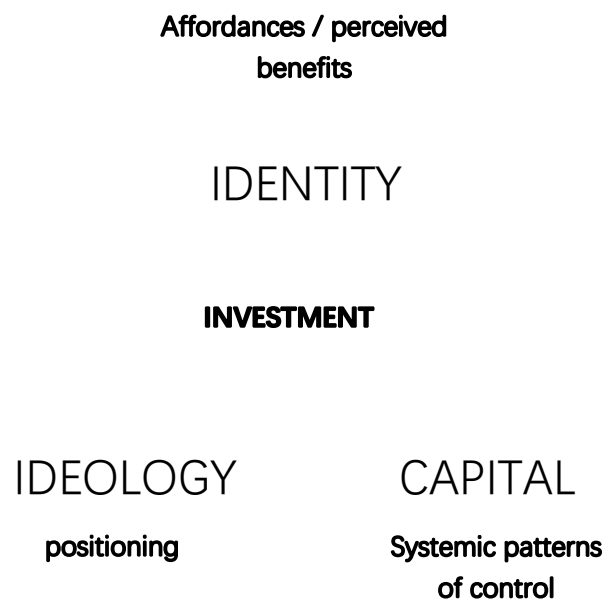
Step 5. Selecting data

While I reread the field texts, I repeated the established research questions in my mind one after another. In order to answer these questions, I had to comprehend the historical and social context of the data while selecting data related to my research questions. This process of reading is very important since it aims to hunt for the essential meanings which can be found in the data. Recurrent themes found throughout the data began to emerge with each reading and relevant topics related to the driving research questions and fragments with these themes were selected to tell the 'stories' of participants.

The selected themes were in relation to the subjects' "perceived benefits" (e.g. future

job, travel) derived from their learning investment, their intersubjective “positionings” (e.g. identities as learners, as professionals, as family members) and the “systemic patterns of control” (e.g. Chinese education policies, university exams). These categories were derived from the proposed model by Darwin and Norton (2015, p. 42).

Figure 3. Darwin and Norton’s 2015 Model of Investment



Step 6. Translating and coding

Before translating the data, I went through all my textual data (interview transcripts, direct notes, field observations, etc.) in a systematic way. With the help of my two colleagues who hold a master’s degree in translation and interpretation (English and Chinese), all selected fragments were translated into English (see the corpus in the appendix of this document). Then the ideas, concepts and themes were coded to fit the categories according to the most frequent themes found in their narratives. In the English transcripts, T is the researcher and the participants are identified by the first two initials of their names.

In narrative inquiry, coding is a useful way for creating a conceptual frame for analyzing the material. In general, before coding, it is vital to develop the storyline of the participants. The storyline is the analytic thread that unites and integrates the major themes of the study. As my data were coded, the coding scheme was constantly refined, which meant I added to or expanded at times, or narrowed and revised the coding categories. In the analysis, when I quote the coded material to prove my points, both Chinese and English versions are provided to ensure reliability of the interpretation and coding. For the textual data from the online interviews, the capital letter 'LOC' are adopted and followed by the first letter of participant's name (D refers to Ding; C refers to Cherry; S refers to Serena and L refers to Lily) as well as the date when the conversation took place. For example, LOC_L_20130612 stands for the data from the online interview with Lily on 12th June, 2013. The data from face-to-face interviews is coded by the letters 'LF2F'. I categorized the data according to the main theme as well as the date throughout the whole process and I used the abbreviation. Equally, the first letter of the participant's name is employed. For instance, LF2F_S_FAM_20131129 refers to the data from the face-to-face interview of Serena whose theme is family and was taken on 29th November, 2013. Based on the different topic of the interview, FAM refers to family; JOB refers to the theme related to their experience as well as expectation of jobs; CEL refers to their current station of English learning, IFEL refers to the influencing factors of English learning and HOB refers to their hobbies. Since there was only one focus group discussion, the letters FGD_20131216 are used to refer to the data from focus group discussion which was organized on 16th December, 2013.

Step 7. Retelling the story

Narrative inquiry includes a process of reorganizing the basic themes or story lines based on narrative clues and reordering them to form a composite narrative frame that relates the 'lived experience' of each participant. Retelling the story is a challenge for

many narrative researchers since narration should link two necessary factors: story and narrator. The different relations between them may result in different narrative contexts. I chose to simply 'tell the story', which means I acted as audience, placing myself outside of the story and acting as the medium for conveying the information. So, I just recorded, then told, commented and explained their stories.

The whole process from composing the field text corpora to composing the research text is a tough and complex transition. "Dissection is an essential part of scientific method, and it is particularly tempting to disassemble people's experience when narrative inquirers leave the field and begin analysis and interpretation at a distance from participants" (Bateson, 1989, p.10). Narrative inquiries are about autobiographies to some extent. It is easy for the researcher to shape the narrative inquiry plotlines according to the interests of the researcher's own narrative and personal experience. A great deal of effort must be made to resist this temptation. Connelly and Clandinin (2000) argue that the main change from the field text to the research text is that the research text is written for other researchers and the participants and it goes beyond the particularity of personal experience from the field text corpora. So it is necessary that narrative inquiry should not be limited to simply narrating the story and telling a life story, but also about constructing a theory that emerges from analyzing the narratives.

4.6 The limitations of the methodology

In spite of the fact that I have done my best in the procedure of data collection, analysis, and the ultimate writing of the thesis, I have to admit that there are certain unavoidable limitations and flaws in my research. I would like to acknowledge them and I also regard them as possible directions for future research.

The first main limitation is the duration of the research. I spent a total of 8 weeks in the research site of China for observation, interviews, and the focus group and kept in

touch with the participants by QQ for more than two and a half years. However, I believe if I had been able to stay at the research site longer, I might have been able to capture the dynamic process and the social as well as linguistic setting of my study further. I might also have gained richer data which could have granted me a perspective both as an outsider and insider.

The second limitation is that I could not accurately state all of the effects of my presence on the participants, which is also common to almost all qualitative studies. When I communicated with the participants, did my identity and position (teacher? learner? friend? researcher?) affect the participants? What kind of effect did my identity have on the result of my research? At this stage of my study, I have to accept being uncertain about all of these effects. I hope in the future, if possible, I will be able to continue to investigate in this area.

However, given my position as researcher, as well as observer and a teacher, it can also be argued that I am in a privileged position that allows me insight that can help me learn about the overall experience with English learning for my future work and studies. After all, cultural capital, investment, motivation and identity cannot be understood outside of power relationships in situated historical and sociocultural contexts. Therefore, I would definitely take the researcher's position into account while attempting to understand the impact of learner's perceptivity on English acquisition as a kind of cultural capital, and of identity on language learning.

Chapter 5 Lily

The experiences of four of the ten participants have been selected to represent the commonalities that could be found in the data corpora. For the four cases, the ‘reconstructed’ life histories of each participant are given (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004). These have been reconstructed by first reducing and re-ordering their narratives into a brief summary of their stories told, as they have been recorded and transcribed by the transcriber. The themes are selected in relation to the subjects’ “perceived benefits” that can come from learning English, their intersubjective “positionings” (identities) and the “systemic patterns of control” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p42). We begin with the narrative inquiry of Lily. The following three chapters include the stories of Serena (chapter 6), Ding (chapter 7) and Cherry (chapter 8)

5.1 Lily’s Story

Lily is a 23-year-old girl who has been raised in a family in which her father is a construction worker in Tibet and her mother is a housewife. Following a suggestion by her parents after she graduated from secondary school, she entered Ya’an Vocational College and chose English Teacher Education as her major, although she would have preferred Tourism Management as she would have liked to become a tour guide in the future. The underlying reason for her parents’ suggestion is closely related to their professions. Her father’s job is toilsome, non-stable and dangerous, which makes her mother worried about her father all the time. Lily is the only child in her family and her parents hoped she could lead a settled life in the future. After she graduated from college, she was employed by a private school as an English teacher where she was still working at the time of data collection.

5.2 Lily and English

Lily’s first investment in English should be understood in relation to her initial student identity while studying English in secondary school. At that time, English was

her favorite subject and she was also the class delegate. Her parents were proud of this although they didn't know a single English word. Besides her parents, other relatives encouraged her to learn English well because they believed that the acquisition of English could ensure her bright future job perspectives. She herself valued English for the access it could provide her in the future. So she devoted much of her time and money to English learning.

Extract 1 (LOC_L_20130612)

滕：你什么时候开始学习英语的呢？

丽：嗯.....我初中的时候吧，我那个时候还是班里的英语课代表呢！

我们的英语老师人非常好，教得也好，很细心，英语是我最喜欢的科目了。

滕：那你花在英语的精力和时间多不多？

丽：比较多了，喜欢嘛，所以也愿意花时间和精力去学习，

我还买了很多的参考书啊，参加补课啊什么的，总之是花了大力气呢！

滕：除了喜欢，还没有其他原因促使你学习英语啊？

丽：让我想想啊.....啊，因为英语很有用嘛！

滕：具体在哪些方面？

丽：哪些方面啊.....

（大约 20 秒之后）找工作的时候啊，出去旅游的时候啊，等等等等吧！

其实.....我也不是太清楚，但总归是有用的，应该吧！

01. T- When did you start to learn English?

02. L- Hmm...I began to learn English at secondary school and I was the English delegate in my class.

03. My English teacher was very nice, patient and very professional so English was my favorite subject.

04. T- How much time and energy did you devote to your English learning?

05. L- A lot. Because I loved it, I loved to spend a lot of time and energy on it.

06. I also bought many English reference books, attended the make-up lessons and

so on. In a nutshell, I invested a lot into it.

07. T- Besides your liking English, was there any other reason urging you to learn English?
08. L- Because it is useful.
09. T- Can you give me more detail?
10. L- let me think....
11. (after approximately 20 seconds) When I hunt for a job, or when I go travelling abroad, or something like that....
12. In fact, I am not so clear...anyway, it is useful, hmm... it should be.

Lily directly states that her attitude towards English is very positive and that English was her favorite subject. Her original reason for her investment in English language learning was mainly based on her view of her English teacher (lines 02-03, Extract 1 above) whom she found to be “very nice, patient and very professional”. As Norton (2013) points out a researcher should try to find a meaningful connection between a learner’s desire and commitment to learn a language, and her or his complex and changing identity. A language learner may be highly motivated but with little investment in the language practices of a given classroom or community. In this extract recounting her early encounters with English language learning (as a student) Lily appears to be highly invested in the language practices of the *classroom* but shows no immediate evidence of investment in the wider community of English language users. However, her parents did appear to really promote her investment in the wider community of English speakers (or at least this is what she emphasizes) due to the social capital this may bring (perceived benefits).

Lily’s sense of engagement with the language community is rather vague, based on possible affordances (job, travelling) but she then follows with “I am not so clear” but ‘it is useful...hmm, it should be’ (line 12, Extract 1 above). Returning to the ideas promoted by van Lier (2004), action, perception and interpretation of the ecological

affordances of language learning interact in a continuous cycle of mutual reinforcement. Taking this notion further, Menezes (2011) has spoken of ‘niches’ in language learning: a niche is an environment mediated by language; it is a place to act in while using the language and it can also be the language user’s position in a discourse community. As we can see in Lily’s data, she is unable to clearly position herself in the discourse community; the affordances of her investment in language learning are no longer apparent to her.

5.3 Lily’s family

Due to her parents’ unsettled lifestyle, they hoped Lily could live a steady and cozy life that would be different from theirs. So they insisted that she choose teaching as her career. In China, being a teacher means one can have a steady life, especially in public school. Public schools are run by the national government and are public institutions. The staff in public institutions have a stable salary, suffer few risks of being fired and have many benefits which are not available to other people such as insurance, funding for housing and holidays.

Lily’s mother is a housewife and all her domestic tasks are to take care of Lily and her father. She always leads an anxious life because of her husband’s job. Both her parents hope for a different life for Lily so they suggested she choose a career as a teacher which is, from their point of view, steady and comfortable.

Extract 2 (LOC_L_20130612)

滕：你为什么选择英语教育作为你的专业呢？你喜欢小孩子吗？

丽：我选择这个专业和我父母的意见有关。他们希望我以后能成为一个老师。我本身不喜欢小孩子。

其实，我想当的是导游，多好玩啊，哈哈，天天出去旅游。

滕：那为什么不选(导游)相关的专业呢？

丽：我爸妈不同意啊

他们说导游天天到处跑，风吹日晒的，太辛苦了

滕：他们觉得当老师不辛苦？

丽：嗯，他们觉得当老师挺舒适的，天天呆在办公室里，风吹不着，雨淋不着的，呵呵

估计与我父母的职业有关吧。

我说过的，我的父亲是一名在西藏工作的建筑工。他的工作又辛苦又不稳定。我的母亲是一名全职的家庭妇女，她每天都在担心我父亲的安危。他们都没有多少文化。

我是家里唯一的孩子，他们希望我以后能过上安定的生活。

01. T- Why did you choose teaching as your major? Do you love kids?

02. L- According my parents' advice. They want me to be a teacher.

03. In my own opinion, I don't like children.

04. In fact, I want to be a tour guide. So funny. Haha (laughs) I can travel every day.

05. T- Why didn't you choose the related (tour guide) major?

06. L- My parents don't agree. They thought a tour guide had to go to many places and would be exposed to the weather.

07. It is so toilsome.

08 T- Your parents thought being a teacher would be comfortable?

9. L- Well, they believe it's comfortable because a teacher can stay in an office and won't be exposed to the weather. he he (laughs)

10. I think maybe it is related to their professions.

11. As I have mentioned, my father is a construction worker in Tibet.

12. His work is so hard and unsettled. My mother is a housewife and she worries about my father all the time. Neither of them got much education.

13. I am the only child in my family. They hope I have a settled life in the future.

In this extract, Lily mentions that she would have preferred to be a tour guide. In her opinion, this job could be fun since it would give her opportunities to travel around the world (line 04, Extract 2 above). However, she gives it up, without any resistance, just because her parents disagree. However, when she talks about this, her voice is quiet and she laughs a lot (lines 04 and 10, Extract 2 above), which reinforces that she is a girl who is affected by her emotion to some extent when she makes some of her decisions. And she is also aware that her parents' choice for her job is related to their professions. In essence, it is her parents' social class (lines 12 and 13, Extract 2 above) as well as educational background (line 13, Extract 2 above) that greatly influences their preferences concerning different aspects of the child's life, in particular in this extract we see how their current capital has an impact on what they tell Lily as far as professional choices.

Extract 3 (LOC_L_20130612)

丽：除了我的父母，我的亲戚们也支持我读这个专业。

他们说女孩子当老师以后能找个好婆家，呵呵……

滕：你自己的意见呢？

丽：我觉得也是吧，

据说女教师和男公务员是黄金搭配呢！

因为虽然教师工资不高，但是有寒暑假啊，可以多照顾一下家里。

01. L- Besides my parents, most of my relatives hope me to be a teacher in the future.

02. They said female teacher can get married easily. Haha....

03. T- What is your own opinion about that?

04. L- I think maybe they are right.

05. It is said female teacher and male civil servant make the best couples.

06. Although the salary of teacher is not high,

07. they have winter and summer holidays,

08. which means they can have more spare time to finish their domestic duties.

In extract 3, Lily underscores certain Chinese traditions, for instance, the fact that it is a virtue that the wife should deal with the domestic affairs while the husband should take charge of external matters. She is, in essence, highlighting the ‘ideology’ that plays a role in the nexus proposed by Darvin and Norton (2015). Of course, nowadays, more and more women go out to work, but it is still considered to be important that the wife should handle the domestic duties well. So the two holidays which are only available to teachers are very attractive for many people. The identity as a future wife and mother suggest it is a “perfect” career for her in the future. Moreover, it is said that the best couple is the male civil servant and a female teacher because it is in accordance with these traditional views.

In general, among the Chinese population, the civil servant is considered to be the best job for many college graduates (Zhang & Tian, 2014). With government-covered health care, subsidized housing, high pension rates and slim chances of being laid off, for many applicants a civil servant role is a safe job. Statistics showed that applicants taking the public servant exam in 2012, 2013 and 2014 totaled 1.23 million, 1.38 million and 1.52 million respectively (Zhang & Tian, 2014, p.221). Zhang and Tian (2014) also stated that the stable income, sound pension and enviable healthcare as well as the respectable social status of civil servants in China are the main temptations which can account for this social phenomenon. (p. 222).

Lily recounts how her mother told her being a teacher means she can get married to a well-paid man easily. She repeats her mother’s and her relatives’ sentences with a firm voice and without any doubt (lines 02 and 05-08, Extract 3 above). It can be assumed that Lily’s parents’ social class, which is related to their social network, plays a considerable role within the process of her major choice. Moreover, given her family’s current social situation, many of her relatives, friends and companions are less likely to have the capacity to have more ‘developed’ or ‘advanced’ ideas as ‘parental’ networks tend to be homogeneous with respect to the social class. This is

supported by the evidence that her relatives also promoted the idea that she study English and become a teacher.

Extract 4 (LOC_L_20151219)

滕：在你的工作中，你觉得英语的影响程度有多大？

丽：比较大吧，找工作的时候，英语是必要条件啊。

在工作中，英语也是占比较大的比重的。

01. T- To what extent does English acquisition affect your work?

02. L- The effect is huge.

03. For job hunting it is necessary.

04. And during work, it is considerably important.

Lily constructs a firm and close relationship between learning English and the access to certain forms of social and economic capital. In her view, English acquisition is likely to offer her an access to a ‘steady’ and ‘comfortable’ job (line 02-04, Extract 4 above). It also means she has possibilities to break away from her parents’ social class. Lily acknowledges that English is a valuable form of cultural capital, which is very likely to convert into economic and social capital in the future. Just as Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction posits, she is eager to use her cultural capital to improve her economic capital and social capital.

5. 4 Lily's college

After Lily graduated from secondary school, she entered Ya'an Vocational College, which offers associated degree programs to the graduates after three years. In the college, she undertook a series of professional training workshops about English including listening, speaking, reading and writing. She now declares that she has made great progress, especially in her oral English.

Extract 5 (LOC_L_20130918)

滕：大学里你们的课程一般是哪些？

丽：我们在大学里要学综合英语、英语听力、语音及跨文化交际等各种专业课。

学了这些课之后，我才发现我在中学时的英语学习是远远不够的，

我还有好多问题需要解决：纠正发音啊，提高听力啊等等

滕：现在你的这些问题解决了吗？

丽：大部分已经解决了吧，我们的老师基本上都至少是硕士学历，在课堂上老师和我们也是用英语交流，最开始我是听不太懂的，但是现在我发现我和老师在课堂上用英语交流是没有问题的，我们学校还有外教。我经常去找他们聊天所以啊，我的口语，提高了……算是蛮多的吧！哈哈……你知道的，我以前的口语实在是太烂了。

滕：当时好多同学都是这样的，我很抱歉啊

丽：哈哈，不用。没办法嘛……我们都是农村孩子。找不到……

滕：途径

丽：……嗯，去练习口语。最主要考试也不考口语啊

01. T- What are your main courses in your college?

02. L- We need to learn some professional courses, for example,

03. Comprehensive English, listening, Phonetics and Intercultural Communication.

04. After learning these courses, I found that the knowledge I gained in secondary school was so limited.

05. I had many problems to be solved: my accent, my listening, my vocabulary and so on.

06. T- Have you solved your problems?

07. L- I think most of them have been solved.

08. All of my teachers have a Master Degree or above, and they are amazing.

09. They communicate with us in English in class,

10. and at the beginning I couldn't catch their words.

11. But now, I find I have no difficulty in communication.

12. There are native English teachers in our college.

13. I often have a chat with them.

14. So, my oral English, has improved, hmm...much. Ha ha (laughs)
15. You know, my oral was so poor before.
16. T- Most of your classmates suffered many problems then. I should apologize.
17. L- Ha ha (laughs). There is no need (to apologize). (We) can't do anything.
18. We are all from rural regions.
19. (We) can't find...
20. T- access
21. L-...yeah, access, to practice oral English.
22. The most important thing is there is no oral test in the examination.

Line 17,19 and 21 (Extract 5 above) illustrate the lack of social capital resulting in lack of access to improving oral English for Lily and her classmates. As with most rural secondary schools, the research-setting school suffers from the shortage of necessary resources as well as professional teachers to train students' in oral English. This is acknowledged by the researcher/former English teacher in line 16, but Lily quickly responds by indicating that this is a common issue in rural areas.

On the contrary, almost all urban schools offer students special classrooms and materials to practice oral English, what's more, a large number of urban schools employ native English speakers as English teachers to train students in oral English. There are even opportunities to attend summer camps as well as exchange programs in English-speaking countries for the urban students, which are rare for the students in rural schools. Many private English institutions help people improve their oral English, nevertheless, the fees are too high for most students from rural regions. Neither the students nor their parents pay attention to oral practice due to their limited economic, cultural and social capital.

Moreover, under the examination-driven educational system, gaining high scores (which do not include oral competences) is their main goal for English learning. The

full mark for the English examination is 150 in the research setting province, with listening only covering 25 points and the 125 remaining points are about reading and writing. It is the main reason why Lily's investment in English learning is selective (line 22, Extract 5 above).

5.5 Lily's work place

Lily feels very worried about the future, because she wants to move to a public school to become a teacher although now she is employed as an English teacher in a private school. In extracts 6 and 7 (below), she brings out the critical differences between public and private schools. Working in the public school means 'one is in the system' (in Chinese one is “编制”) where one can have government-covered health care, subsidized housing, high pension rates and slim chances of being laid off, all of which are impossible in the private school. In China, if one wants to be a teacher in a public school, one must attend a series of serious tests (usually including a written examination and interview) organized by the local government. Only the one who passes the tests can be employed in public schools and be called a “formal” teacher. The government also requires the candidates have a bachelor degree and a teacher qualification.

Lily sees all of these as difficult for her. The fact is her college only offered a lower degree and in order to get a bachelor degree, she had planned to get further education at another university. But now she finds she is too busy to get through the test because of lack of time since she suffers huge pressure in her work place in order to keep her job. So she is caught in a dilemma.

Extract 6 (LF2F_L_JOB_20131127)

丽：我以后想成为一名正式的小学教师，我听说这很难的，是这样吗？

滕：也不一定吧，如果你想进公立学校，那就得参加政府组织的考试，并且一般情况下，会要求考生具有本科及以上学历。你有这些东西吗？

丽：没有呢，毕业之后我只能得到专科学历。所以，我想要参加继续教育以得到本科学历。

01. L- In future, I want to go to a primary school to be a “formal” teacher (meaning she wants to be a teacher in public school).

02. I have heard that it is very difficult, right?

03. T- It depends.

04. If you want to go to a public school, it is required that you must attend the test which is organized by the local government.

05. In common, the candidates are required to have a bachelor degree and a Teacher Certification. Do you have these?

06. L- No, I can only get the college degree after my graduation.

07. So, in order to get a bachelor degree, I planned to receive further education.

Extract 7 (LOC_L_20151102)

滕：你现在工作的学校是公立还是私立啊？

丽：私立的，唉……

滕：没参加招考吗？

丽：年初参加了一次，笔试过了，面试没过 (🙄)

滕：为啥？

丽：没有关系，据说都是内定了的。唉，穷人的孩子没办法啊 (🙄)

滕：最近应该也有招考吧？

丽：最近都没时间准备考试，私立学校压力大，唉…一个不小心就被开除了(🙄)

01. T- Is the school you work in public or private school?

02. L- Private...(sigh)

03. T- Didn't you sit the test (organized by the local government to recruit teachers)?

04. L- I sat once at the beginning of this year.

05. I had passed the written examination but failed in the interview.
06. T- Why?
07. L- I have no “*guanxi*”. It is said that it is match-fixing.
08. (sigh)... the road is always tough for the poor children.
09. T- Is there any other test recently?
10. L- I don't have enough time to prepare (the test) recently.
11. There is huge pressure in this private school all the time. (sigh)
12. It is very easy to be fired...even because of a tiny mistake.

As I have mentioned previously, to be a formal teacher in public schools means one should pass the writing exam and interview. Lily succeeded in the writing exam but failed in the interview. She ascribes her failure in the interview to the lack of necessary social capital, which the term of *guanxi* in Chinese, a principle concept in Chinese society, is closely equal to the conception of social capital (line07, Extract 7 above). What Lily called “match-fixing” means there is cheating in the examinations and that the one who will pass the exam is cut and dried at the very beginning. It is difficult to judge whether her failure was because she lacked ‘*guanxi*’ or not. However, it is true that if one had necessary social capital (such as friends or relatives in powerful positions), they would be very likely to gain relevant information that would be very helpful to the examination. As a result, a lack of necessary social capital could be one of the reasons for Lily's failure in the interview. Just as Bourdieu points out, social capital is a kind of material and symbolic resource based on the social relationships in natural and informal settings.

5. 6 Lily's perspectives on her future

Currently, Lily is still on the path for entering the public school system (in Chinese this is “编制”) which indicates that her investment in English will continue. As long as she works as an English teacher, she will invest in English and can get capital from it.

Extract 8 (LOC_L_20160122)

滕：你还在继续准备去公立学校教书吗？

丽：是的，公立学校待遇好也稳定。我还是会继续准备的。最近我买了好多参考资料，准备考试。

01. T- Are you still preparing to enter public school?

02. L- Yes, the teachers in public school get a better salary and the job is more steady,

03. so I will continue to prepare for it.

04. Recently, I have bought many reference books for the test.

The words such as “steady” or “comfortable” which her parents highly value are mentioned frequently during the conversation (line 09, Extract 1 and line 02, Extract 8 above) and that is the main reason why she devotes a lot time and energy to becoming a “formal” teacher in a public school. We can see that Lily’s family’s social background has been a determining factor for her when choosing her future, both in her job and her marriage.

Lily explains that in her school, both the headmaster and the students’ parents pay considerable attention to practicing English, which indicates that she has to master good skills in listening and speaking. In order to enhance her oral English, she devotes more time to improving her oral English than she did while in college. She often goes to Starbucks to communicate with native speakers. It is her job that pushes her to continue investing in English. When asked to what extent English acquisition was related to her perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital, Lily explains that it took at least one third of her working life, and the other two third were focused on her teaching skills and personal development.

5.7 Comment

With reference to Lily’s journey of learning English, it is clear that thus far it has

involved negotiation of many facets of her identity: social and linguistic, but also gender (for instance, the question of marriage comes up) and class identity, that are intimately connected and have been challenged simultaneously in complex ways during her process of English learning. For Lily, being an English teacher is a way of reorienting herself away from her family's social class. She can use her personal experience, talent and language resources to upgrade her access to cultural, economic and social capital. Lily's stake in English learning is also a bid to break from the confining circumstances of her father's itinerant lifestyle (construction worker moving from site to site) and become a daughter who can help improve her parents' life.

Just as many SLA theorists such as Ellis (1985), Krashen (1981), Schumann (1978a) and Stern (1983) recognize that language learners do not live in idealized, homogeneous communities but in complex, heterogeneous ones, Lily's identity has changed in accordance to her motivation towards English. She has finally accepted being a teacher (she initially wanted to work in tourism). What's more, she is satisfied with her salary and it is this experience that makes her realize her English acquisition is not only useful but it is a real cultural capital which can bring in 'real' economic capital and social capital.

Just as Norton has mentioned (2015), the identity of the second language learner will affect his/her attitude and investment in language learning. For Lily, her identity is multiple and contradictory. On the one hand, she is a young girl who would like to move to a job that she really likes. On the other hand, she is an obedient daughter who wants to improve her parents' lives and does not want to disappoint them. Her parents figure frequently in her talks during the interviews. It is her parents' suggestion that determines both her job and marriage. Hence, the conception that identity is a site of struggle helps to explain how Lily makes her decisions. The identity of an obedient daughter makes her follow her parents' advice and also pushes her to invest more in

English learning as she chose English Teacher Education as her major. After she graduated, she became an English teacher. During this time, her identity transformed from a student to a teacher and during her work, she gradually fell in love with her students and her job. Her identity of daughter and teacher became less discordant over time.

The original purpose of Lily's English learning was linked to simply wanting to get high marks in the examination so that she could go to college and find a well-paid job. But her identity changes across a complex social history and multiple desires. Her English not only serves as a medium for offering opportunities to exchange information but helps her organize and reorganize a sense of who she is and how it affects her social world. Hence, the notion of investment can explain her attitude and actions more appropriately.

Her changing identity across time and space explains Lily's investment in English learning. Norton (2000) notes an investment in the target language is also an investment in the learner's own identity, an identity which is constantly changing across time and space. For Lily, the change in her investment in English is mainly related to her academic language learning. Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the main four parts in second language learning. When Lily was a student, she mainly focused on her reading and writing in order to get better grades in the examination in which listening and speaking only took up a small proportion. After she became a teacher, her investment in English transferred to speaking. McKay and Wong's (1996) research investigated students' investment in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. They argue that investment in each of these skills can be highly selective and that different skills can have different values in relation to learner identities.

Lily's motives, her investment in language learning and the meaning she ascribes to

English competence must be understood by examining the sociocultural world from which they emerge, and their dynamism over time and space. Lily’s investment in English began largely based on social and cultural capital, pushed with a perceived gain in economic capital, which was then reinforced when she was hired as an English teacher.

Her parents’ social status and capital determine her choice of profession. The people around her affect her choice. It represents that her social capital influences her career and her future. It is easiest to consider social capital as the wealth (or benefit) that exists because of an individual’s social relationships. Within these social relationships, there are three primary dimensions that influence the development of these mutual benefits: the structure of the relationships, the interpersonal dynamics that exist with the structure, and the common context and language held by individuals in the structure. Most of her relatives have little acquisition of English, but they believe the acquisition of English has a close relationship to a good job prospect. Her parents conceived English acquisition as a great value form of cultural capital which can bring in economic and social capital for them and offer a stable future for her. And she herself realizes that English acquisition plays a critical role in her job. It means for her English acquisition is not an ‘abstract’ capital but a ‘specific’ capital which can construct her economic and social capital.

The chart below shows a graphic summary of Lily’s perceived benefits, her intersubjective positionings and the systemic patterns of control which all contribute to her changing identities and investment in English.

Table 3. Summary of Lily’s affordances, positions, patterns of control and tensions

| Participant | Affordances/Perceived benefits | Intersubjective positionings | Systemic patterns of control | Tensions of |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| Lily (as a language learner) | Enjoyment | Dedicated learner, class delegate | Parental family pressure | & Seems to be fully invested in her classroom community |

| | | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Lily (daughter) | Job security and other benefits as teacher | Obedient daughter | Civil servant roles in Chinese society | Would prefer to be tour guide |
| Lily (English speaker) | Access to social, capital and economic capital | Member of social network | Power infrastructures in rigid Chinese society | Awareness of need for English as access to different types of capital |
| Lily (teacher) | Improvement in English can help her prepare for the state exams for public school | Overworked teacher, no time for official exam for public school teachers; pressured to not make mistakes | Urban/rural access to social and cultural capital to get into public teaching | Would like to move to public school job; recognizes lack of access to social and cultural capital ('guanxi') for exam yet invested in English learning as a capital for becoming public teacher |

Notes:

1. In all interviews, names are abbreviated: T for Teng, L for Lily.

Chapter 6 Serena

6.1 Serena's Story

Serena is the only left-behind child of all the participants. Her parents have worked in a factory in Zhejiang Province, which is located in the developed southeastern China, since she was six years old. She can usually see her parents annually, although sometimes she sees them only once every two years, because Zhejiang Province is very far away from her hometown. Serena is slightly different from my other participants because of her parents' long-term absence. During her secondary school time, Serena worked very hard and often came to me for help with her English learning. However, she didn't seem to catch my words when I explained concepts of the English language to her, or if she did she would not verbalize her understanding. I would ask her, "You did not understand my words, right?" and she would nod her head and smile.

After she graduated, Serena chose a college near her parents' workplace, which made her so happy. When she received the letter of admission from college, she called me to express her appreciation because she believed her English language education had been of great help in her *gaokao*. Meanwhile, she could not help sharing the happiness of reuniting with her parents with me. She said it had been her dream since she was six, when she was separated from her parents.

Following her parents' expectations, Serena took Nursing as her major. During all the time she was at college, Serena kept on investing in English language learning. After graduation from college, she found a job in Shanghai. Her knowledge of English was of much help to her in her job, and she even got the praise from her strict leader because of her English.

However, her parents decided to return to their hometown due to their age. As the only child in the family, Serena had to go with them because she had to take care of her parents, even though both her parents and she knew there were few opportunities to use English in their hometown, so her investment in English for many years would be in vain.

6.2 English and cultural capital

Regarding the issue of whether English is a valuable form of cultural capital, Serena's viewpoint varies at times and at different stages of her life. In the period of secondary school, during college and up to working as a nurse in Shanghai (one of the most developed cities in China), she treats English as an important form of cultural capital. However, after she returns to her hometown, a small town which lies in the undeveloped southwestern China, English provides her nothing for her job so she stops regarding English as a form of cultural capital.

When Serena was in secondary school, she worked very hard on learning English. She had even asked me (teacher/researcher) to offer her extra help for her English at the weekends and during spare time. Many of her classmates nicknamed Serena "bookworm" since she devoted almost all her time to her learning. She seldom attended afterschool activities or went out with her friends. As a daughter of a 'blue-collar' family, her sole and biggest dream was that she could go to college so she could become a 'white-collar' worker.

Extract 9 (LF2F_S_FAM_20131129)

滕：你想谈谈你的家人吗？

思 - 嗯...其实...我是一个留守的孩子。 Hehe ... (尴尬地微笑)

滕：你的父母在哪里工作？

思：浙江。

滕：离你的大学不远。

思：是(快乐地回答)。这就是为什么我选择这所大学，我可以经常看到他们了。

滕：你以前多长时间可以看到你的父母一次？

思：嗯...一年一次？有时超过一年。

滕：那你想他们吗？

思：...不太想...一点点吧...你知道的，我都习惯了。自从我六岁以来，他们一直在那里工作。

滕：那么，谁在照顾你呢？

思：我的爷爷奶奶。

01. T- Would you like to talk about your family?

02. S- Hmm... in fact...I am a left-behind child. He he...(smile embarrassedly)

03. T- Where do your parents work?

04. S- Zhejiang.

05. T- It is not far away from your college.

06. S- Yes (answered happily). That's why I chose this college. I can see my parents more frequently than before.

07. T- How often did you see your parents before?

08. S- Hmm...once a year? Sometimes more than one year.

09. T- Did you miss them then?

10. S-...not much...a little bit...as you know, I have got used to it.

11. Since I was six years old, they have been working there.

12. T- Who took care of you then?

13. S- My grandparents.

As most of the so-called left-behind children, she was taken care of by her

grandparents and could only see her parents annually. Although she states she doesn't miss her parents (line 10, Extract 9 above), her happiness when she can see them more frequently than before indicates she missed her parents when she was left-behind in her hometown. In China, studies have reported that left behind children encounter more educational problems, such as higher rates of absence and dropout rates (Lu, 2006; Zhou & Duan, 2006). Left behind children are also found to be more vulnerable to psychological problems such as loneliness, depression, anxiety, and introversion (Gao, Wang, Liu & Wang, 2007; Huang, Wu, Peng, Li, Qi & Shi, 2005; Wang, Zhang, Sun & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, Wang, Sun, Chen, Zhang, Gao & Xing, 2007).

Due to her social and historical situation, for Serena English played a dual role in future gains. Not only could she ensure better possibilities for getting a civil servant job but doing well in English served as a platform into getting into a higher education institution closer to her parents so there was an emotional investment in to learn and practice English. Her investment did pay off, at least at first, as she managed to get into the university of her choice and then was able to interact with English language speaking community once she had a job in Shanghai. However, it must be recalled that her major in nursing was decided by her parents, principally because they believed that once they were old or sick a daughter as a nurse would be helpful (line 03, Extract 10 below). As we know from the summary of Serena's story, this eventually became true as Serena had to give up her job in Shanghai to move back to the rural area with her parents. In Serena's story we can clearly see the overlap between Serena's intersubjective positioning of 'obedient child – good student' and systemic patterns of control (parental decision-making is unquestionable).

Extract 10 (LOL_S_20130619)

滕：为什么选择护士作为你的专业呢？

思：我的父母为我做的决定。他们觉得当护士挺有用的，尤其当他们年纪大了

或生病的时候。并且，我奶奶的身体不好，我也想帮一点忙。我六岁起就是我奶奶带我的。我爱我的奶奶，我希望她健健康康的。

滕：你喜欢当护士吧

思：说实话，不喜欢。护士工作太累了。

滕：那你喜欢什么职业呢？

思：我自己？我的兴趣不是最重要的。嗯，并且我也不太清楚自己真正喜欢什么。我相信我父母的选择。不管他们做什么都是为我好，也最适合我。

01. T- Why did you choose nursing as your major?

02. S- My parents made the decision for me.

03. They believe it will be helpful when they become old or sick.

04. What is more, my grandma is in a poor health. I want to do something helpful.

05. I have been brought up by my grandma since I was six.

06. I love her and hope her be well.

07. T- Do you like nursing?

08. S- To be honest, no. Because nursing is very tough.

09. T- What's your own favorite major?

10. S- Me? My interesting is not the most important.

11. Hmm, in addition, I am not sure about my real interesting.

12. I believe in my parents' choice.

13. Whatever they did will be good and most appropriate for me.

It can be deduced that the long-term absence of her parents in her childhood gave her a strong desire to fulfill her parents' desires. The unique experience of being brought up by her grandma made her think about all her family members rather than herself, even in term of the important decision of her major which had a close relationship to her future job. She convinced herself that her parents love her and want the best for

her (line 13, Extract 10 above) so she followed her parents' advice without any hesitation (line 12, Extract 10 above).

In college, she still performed as the hard-working student because she had to pass a series of tests to be an “outstanding” nurse as her parents expected. She mentioned that a Singaporean hospital had even made recruitment for nursing at her college. Getting higher than CET-6 in English was one of the requirements for becoming a nurse. Also, apart from her parents' suggestions, working at hospital meant getting a considerable salary, which attracted her even more. She ever mentioned that her aunt worked as a designer in a Singaporean company. Her aunt was the good example for her whole family and the main reason why her aunt could go to Singapore was because of her fluent English. Therefore, she devoted more time and attention to English learning in order to obtain this kind of opportunity for the future.

Extract 11 LF2F_S_FAM_20131129

思：让我想一想哈。嗯...好像没有人对我的英语学习有坏的影响呢。好的影响方面呢，我觉得我的姑姑对我的英语学习影响很大。

滕：你姑姑？

思：嗯。她是我爸爸的妹妹，在新加坡做设计师。她简直就是我们整个家族的榜样。她的经历听起来就完全是一个励志故事。我的姑姑高考没发挥好，因为她的数学很差。所以高中毕业后，她就到广东省（位于中国东南部发达地区）的一个小服装厂做了生产线工人。她很喜欢绘画，因为她从小时候很擅长画画。所以服装厂工作的时候，她在业余时间学习设计，几年后，她终于成了一名设计师。当然，那时她就把小服装厂工作辞了，基于她的绘画技巧和丰富的服装制作经验，她在一家大的服装设计公司找到一个新工作。在中学的时候，英语是她最擅长的学科。所以即使她没能上大学，她也继续学习英语。所以当她的公司决定在新

加坡建立一个新的分公司时，她因为英语好而在很多的竞争者中争取到了这个机会。现在，她嫁给了一个新加坡人，小日子过得可幸福了。

...

我爸爸经常说，在中学时他除了英语其他科目都学得不错。然后我姑姑就只有英语成绩好，其他科目都很一般。可现在他们命运就完全不一样了。这期间英语似乎起到了蛮大的作用。

01 . S- Let me think about it.

02 . Hmm...It seems that nobody had a bad effect on my English learning.

03 . In terms of good effect, I think my aunt has a great effect.

04 . T- Your aunt?

05 . S- Yes. She is my father's sister and works as a designer in Singapore.

06 . She is the good example of my whole family.

07 . Her experience sounds like an inspirational story.

08 . My aunt did a bad job in *gaokao* since her mathematics was very bad.

09 . After she graduated from senior high school,

10 . she went to a small clothing factory as a worker of production line in Guangdong Province (a province lies in the developed southeast of China).

11 . She liked drawing since she was a child and was very good at drawing.

12 . So during her working in the clothing factory,

13 . she learned designing in her spare time

14 . and several years later she finally became a designer.

15 . Of course, she had quit the job at the small clothing factory

- 16 . and found a new job in a big costume designing factory
- 17 . based on her good drawing skills and rich experiences in costume making.
18. Since she was in secondary school, English was the best subject for her.
19. Even if she couldn't go to university,
- 20 . she has continued her English learning for those years.
- 21 . So when her company decided to establish a new branch in Singapore,
- 22 . she won the opportunity among many competitors
- 23 . because of her English acquisition.
- 24 . And now she married a Singaporean and leads a very happy life.
25. She always told me most of her peers in that small clothing factory
26. still took on similar jobs and left their children in hometown.
- ...
25. My father frequently said when he was in secondary school,
- 26 he could learn many subjects well except English.
- 27 While my aunt was only good at English and did a bad job in other subjects.
28. Now their fates are so different.
- 29 During this process, English seems play a very important role.

The experience of her aunt may not be a common one. However, it offers an example that English acquisition helps learners' social upward mobility (line 24-29, Extract 11 above). For most young men who can not go to university, their main choice is going to coastal regions (mainly in southeast of China) to take on manual work. After several years, they would get married with a person who has similar experiences. When they have children, most of them would leave the baby to be taken care of by their parents in the hometown and continue working in the coastal regions (line 25-26, Extract 11 above). In fact, most of these young men are left-behind children. In that case, the history of left-behind children would repeat.

As discussed in chapter 2, cultural capital has three types: embodied, objectified and institutionalized cultural capital. For the English learner, the English acquisition is categorized into embodied cultural capital, since it is consciously acquired and passively inherited. The CET-6 credential is considered to be institutionalized cultural capital, whose greatest social role is in the labor market (hunting for a job). It is easily converted into economic capital, by serving as a heuristic or practical solution with which the seller (job-seeker) can describe his or her cultural capital to the buyer (employer). Serena's case shows this transformation of the English learning process through these three types of cultural capital. Moreover, it also underscores the intertwining patterns of control and her investment (parental, institutional in the form of the CET-6, etc.).

Significantly, Serena's perception of English as an important form of cultural capital lasted while she worked as a nurse in a hospital in Shanghai, which is one of the most developed cities in China. There were plenty of opportunities for her to communicate in English because there were many foreign patients in the hospital.

Extract 12 (LOL_S_20150619)

滕：你的工作怎么样？

思：还行。虽然有时候很累。

滕：你在工作中使用英语吗？

思：经常。我们医院有外国患者。

滕：你能与他们沟通吗？

思：差不多吧.....基本日常交流没有问题。但如果他们谈论复杂的事情，我很难理解。

滕：做得好。

思：哈哈.....这还不够，我正在更加努力地学习英语。当我第一次用英语与外

国病人交流时，我很紧张而又兴奋，感觉很不错。因为我终于发现我的英语是有用的。你知道吗？连护士长都称赞我了呢，这简直不敢想像，因为她平时她都好严肃的。

01. T- What about your job?
02. S- It's not bad. Although sometimes it is tiring.
03. T- Do you use English in your work?
04. S- Often. There are foreign patients in our hospital.
05. T- Can you communicate with them?
06. S- Almost...but if they talk about the complex things, it is difficult for me to understand. Elementary communications are OK for me.
07. T- Good job.
08. S- Ha ha (laughs). It is not enough and I am making more efforts on English learning.
09. When I first communicated with a foreign patient in English, I was nervous and excited. It's...surprising, and...good.
10. You know, because I finally found my English is useful. You know what?
11. The head nurse praised me which is beyond my imagination because she is always strict with me.

At that time, Serena's identity was not unitary; she was both an English learner and a nurse who could communicate in English. Speaking a second language with the target language speaker empowered her positioning in the language community and during the process she felt a sense of accomplishment at the great progress she had made in English (line 10, Extract 12 above).

Her English learning was not simply to gain material resources but to pursue a kind of self-identification in her community as well as to change the complex power relations

around her as well. To do so, she drew on her symbolic resources such as acting as ‘language broker’ in the hospital to reframe the power relations between herself and her co-workers (line 11, Extract 12 above). In this stage of her life, it seems that Serena was rewarded for her investment in English learning.

However, her perception of English later encountered a big challenge; English went from being an important form of cultural capital to being of no value when she returned to her hometown. Her hometown is a small town lying in the lesser developed southwestern region in China. As her parents got older, it seemed harder and harder for them to bear tough labor jobs. So they decided to return to the hometown. As the only child in her family, Serena had to go with them because she didn’t want to be apart from her parents once again. Another important reason for her return was to be with her fiancé whom she had met on a blind date arranged in her hometown. Serena was aware that there would be less job opportunities in her hometown, but she still decided to return because, as their only child, she had to bear the duty of taking care of her parents.

Extract 13 (LOL_S_20150922)

滕：为什么回到你的家乡？

思：因为我的父母决定回来。我必须和他们一起去。我的父母年纪大了，我得照顾他们。他们只能依靠我。

滕：那你的工作怎么办？

思：我必须离开。我也不想的...但我没办法。

滕：你在你的家乡找到了一份新工作吗？

思：是。但它不如我以前的工作。你也知道在这个小城市找工作有多困难。但我的未婚夫告诉我不要担心。

滕：哇，有人都有未婚夫了呢。

思： 你可能不相信，我是通过相亲认识他的。我知道，这很老土。但是我妈妈的一个朋友介绍的，我的父母对他很满意。

...

滕： 你认为英语在你目前的工作中有用吗？

思： 我不得不说...没用，一点儿...也没有。

滕： 为什么？

思： 因为我的工作完全和英语无关啊。

滕： 它在你的日常生活中有用吗？

思： 呃... 也没有。你知道，这是一个小城市，它不像上海。几乎没有外国人，哪有机会说英语嘛！

01. T- Why did you return to your hometown?

02. S- Because my parents decided to return. I had to go with them.

03. My parents are getting old, I have to take care of them. They only have me to rely on.

04. T- How about your job?

05. S- I had to quit. I didn't want to... but I had to.

06. T- Have you found a new job in your hometown?

07. S- Yes. But it is not as good as my former job. You know how difficult it is to find job in that small city. But my fiancé told me not to worry.

08. T- Whoa, the little girl has got a fiancé.

09. S- You may not believe it but I met him on a blind date. I know, it's outdated.

10. But one of my mother's friend introduced him to me and my parents are satisfied with him.

....

11. T- Do you think English is useful in your current work?

12. S- I have to say...no, it's...nothing.
13. T- Why?
14. S- Because my job has nothing to do with English.
15. T- Is it useful in your daily life?
16. S- Hmm...no.
17. S- You know, it is a small city, it is not like Shanghai.
18. There are almost no foreigners so there is no chance to speak English.

One's social capital is determined to a large extent by his/her social class. As a daughter of a 'blue collar' family, Serena's social capital plays a vital role in each of her crucial decisions both about her job and her marriage. All these decisions affected critically whether English is seen as convertible into cultural capital that can bring economic as well as social capital for her. However, with the change of her identity (ranging from a 'book worm' student endeavoring to please parents and teachers to a well-regarded nurse in a major city to a low demand nursing job in a rural area) and her work places, her perception of English varies from a form of cultural capital to something which is seen as practically useless (line 12, 14, Extract 13 above).

Before Serena returns to her hometown, she constructed a tight connection with learning English in relation to her perceived future access to certain forms of cultural, social and economic capital by holding a firm belief that English could ensure her good job offers and a well-paid job, so she invested significantly in English learning. However, after she settled in her hometown, she found the connections between English and both her current and future access to certain forms of capital had been broken.

6.3 Social capital and motivation/investment in English

Serena's social capital is mainly determined by her social class. Compared with other participants, her parents are different because they worked in a more developed region

for many years. Although they worked in the labor force, they seemed to value more and pay more attention to their child's education. They valued highly the importance of their daughter's English learning so they offered all their best to support her English learning, such as asking Serena to look for extra help on weekends and spare time. Hence, from the beginning, and perhaps in a large part due to systemic control patterns as well as intersubjective positioning, Serena was deeply motivated to learn English.

Serena's English learning is promoted both by instrumental motivation (access to a better future) and it serves as a symbolic power for both her and her parents as well. As Norton (2012, p.2) states, "what is of central interest to researchers of second language identity is that the very articulation of power, identity, and resistance is expressed in and through language. Language is thus more than a system of signs; it is a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated." In addition, language is formulated "not only as a linguistic system, but as a social practice in which experiences are organized and identities negotiated" (Norton, 2010, p350). This is embodied in Serena's story, as an invested learner, she positioned herself in several forms of social practice: as avid language learner, as language broker; Serena even acted as a translator in her parents' factory when she spent holidays with her parents. This made her parents so proud of her, especially in front of their workmates.

Extract 14 (FGD_20131216)

思：-我曾经通过英语赚钱。哈哈...（笑）就在今年暑假。暑假的时候我去了浙江和我父母住了一段时间。工厂（她的父母所工作的工厂）有一个项目与印度公司合作。有一天，印方的负责人没有提前通知就来了。当时专业翻译不在工厂。情急之下经理（工厂）要我为他们翻译。哦，天哪...我紧张死了。你知道，我很少和外国人实际交流。所以.....担心得不行。谢天谢地他没谈论复杂的事情，

他只是想看看项目进行得如何。(工厂的) 经理仍然比较满意, 付了我 200 元。

哈哈... (笑)。

其他人- 经理太抠了! 他应该多付你一些的 (开玩笑)。

思: 是哪, 是哪, 不多 (钱)。但这是我第一次通过英语赚钱! 我感觉很好! 和我想象中一样!

滕: 你的父母 (关于这件事) 怎么看?

思: 哦, 他们太夸张了。他们在同事面前炫耀了近一个星期! 哦, 简直受不了。

滕: 他们怎么炫耀的?

思: 比如“我的女儿终于可以赚钱啦!”“学英语很多年终于值得啦!”“啊, 女儿和我们不一样”

01. Se- I have even earned money through English. Ha ha...(laughs)

02. It happened in this summer vacation. And I spent my vacation with my parents in Zhejiang.

03. The factory (which her parents work in) has a project collaborating with an Indian company.

04. And one day the Indian in charge of the project came without notification in advance. So the professional translator wasn't in the factory at that time.

05. So the manager (of the factory) asked me to translate for them. Oh, my god... I was nervous.

06. You know, I seldom communicate with foreigners. I was...so worried.

07. Fortunately, he didn't talk about complex things and he just wanted to see how the project was going.

08. Still the manager (of the factory) was satisfied and paid me two hundred yuan. Ha ha...(laughs).

09. Others- The manager is a miser! He should have paid you more. (joking)

10. S- Yes, yes, it is not so much (money). But it is the first time I have earned money through English!
11. I feel so good! Just as I imagined before.
12. T- How are your parents (about this thing)?
13. S- Oh, they were exaggerated. They have kept showing off in front of their workfellows almost an entire week! Oooop, so embarrassed.
14. T- How did they show off?
15. S- Such as “Finally, my daughter can earn money.”
16. “It is worthy her learning English for a lot of years.”
17. “Ah, my daughter is different from us.”

It is a fact that Serena always believed English would be a form of cultural capital which could bring in economic and social capital for her. Eventually, this experience reinforced both her and her parents’ beliefs (line 11, 15, 16, Extract 14 above). For her parents, it is not only about the economic payback but also about social stratus (line 17, Extract 14 above). The word “different” means a lot: they do manual labor which is tough and tiring while their daughter can do intellectual work, which symbolizes that their daughter could struggle from ‘blue collar’ class into ‘white collar’ class. Their daughter’s English acquisition acts as a symbolic capital in their community (the factory) which distinguishes them from other community members (their workfellows) (line 13, Extract 14 above).

Identity is produced in a variety of social sites, all of which are structured by relations of power where the person takes up different subject positions. In the factory, Serena’s identity is conceived as a person who can earn money through her English acquisition, which is impossible for both her parents and their co-workers. It means her identity can be considered as a site of struggle from her parents’ social class. The concept that identity is a site of struggle helps to explain how Serena creates and responds to opportunities to speak English. She values the opportunities very much and feels “so

good” about the practical usage of English since she finally gets economic profits as well as social prestige from it.

Paradoxically, it is Serena’s social capital that causes her to stop investing in English. Her parents’ educational level as well as social networks determines they only can undertake manual labor. With their increasing age, it becomes growingly tough to do this kind of work and eventually they have no other option but return to their hometown. And they want Serena go with them. At the very beginning, Serena did not agree because it was obvious there were less opportunities in her small town and all her investment in English would be in vain (line 17-18, Extract 13 above).

However, as the only child who bears the duty of taking care of her parents, Serena eventually gave up her job in Shanghai and returned to her hometown with her parents. Her job in the hometown is not related to English so that in spite of the fact she has English competence, this knowledge only offers a high/er status in a society or community where it can be regarded as cultural capital, which is not the case in the small town where she now lives. After almost nine years spent learning English, Serena has practically given up on her investment in English learning because her most recent life decisions have vitally affected her social capital.

6.4. Comment

Serena’s identity demonstrates how the language learner has a complex social identity that must be understood with reference to larger, and frequently inequitable social structures that are reproduced in day-to-day social interaction (Norton, 1995). It shows how important it is to understand how the language learner understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future (Kramsch, 2013). All of Serena’s investment in English must be understood in reference to her changing identity. During the process of English learning in secondary school, college and

during her time in Shanghai, her identity as a learner as well as a daughter who hopes to change her social class is promoted strongly by her investment in English. At this stage in her life, her identity as an obedient daughter who wants to bear the responsibility of looking after her parents impacts crucial decision-taking in regards to her investment in English (to study hard so that she will get a high mark in English). Finally, her identity as a nurse in a small town where she seldom has any opportunity to use English makes her investment in eventually English decrease to practically nothing.

Moreover, we can see that there is a mutual play between Serena and others in power who acknowledge and value her English as a potential social capital which reinforced (at different points in her life) the notion that English holds potential benefits. Adler and Kwon (2002) identified that the core intuition guiding social capital research is that the goodwill that others have toward us is a valuable resource. In their statement, social capital is ‘the goodwill available to individuals or groups. Its source lies in the structure and content of the actor’s social relations. Its effects flow from the information, influence, and solidarity it makes available to the actor’ (Adler & Kwon 2002, p. 23). For Serena, her investment in English pays off through recognition of her achievements by first her teachers, and then her superiors in her nursing job and by her parents’ friends once she has returned to her parents’ village. However, the pay-off, in the end, does not being the economic and social capital she had anticipated.

The chart below shows a graphic summary of Serena’s perceived benefits, her intersubjective positionings and the systemic patterns of control which all contribute to her changing identities and investment in English. The data shows how Serena’s notion of affordances of the target language shifts according to her perceived niche in the language community. As Menezes (2011) points out, the resources in the English classroom (learning ecology, cf. Gibson, 1986) are not usually sufficient for

successful language acquisition and the learner must look for affordances beyond the classroom. The language affordances are not properties of the niche; they emerge from the language use and Serena shift in jobs resulted in changed perceptions of the affordance the language has for her in terms of professional usefulness and possible personal advance.

Table 4. Summary of Serena’s affordances, positions, patterns of control and tensions

| Participant | Affordances/Perceived benefits | Intersubjective positionings | Systemic patterns of control | Tensions |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Serena (as English learner) | Future job possibilities | ‘Bookworm’; deeply invested in language learning (spends spare time) | Family pressures to be a nurse; lack of access to social and cultural capital (‘left-behind’ child) | No apparent tensions |
| Serena (as nurse in a big city) | Access to nursing school; ‘language broker’ with foreign patients; praise from hospital administrator | Basic communicator at first, more confident member of language community as time goes on | Rigorous entry exams; lack of access to social and cultural capital during childhood | Not completely confident in her English abilities; willing to invest more in her learning |
| Serena (nurse in a rural town) | None; no opportunities to speak English in her job or in the small town | Not fulfilled in her job | Social pressure to care for family, get married | Does not like her job; does not have use for her English |
| Serena (as daughter) | Able to use her English as translator (provides social capital for her parents) | Obedient daughter; wants to make her parents proud | Social pressure to follow family, get married | Does not like her job; does not have use for her English |

Chapter 7. Ding

7.1 Ding's story

Just as most of the participants, Ding is from a peasant family. What makes him different from the others is that his mother is disabled, his father is also weak, and his brother is very young, so his family situation is very complicated. For a long time, he felt ashamed about this, and he was sensitive to and always cared about evaluation from others.

When he first started secondary school, he did not value English at all, because he believed mathematics, physics and chemistry to be of more importance. However, one day, he was selected as a candidate to be a pilot. Being a pilot is conceived as a dream job for many boys. This is not only because of the handsome uniform, but also because of the considerable salary. This was especially important for Ding, as he bore the duty of taking care of his whole family. However, after passing a series of tests, he was eliminated because his English was not good enough. That experience of failure seemed to make him realize the importance of English.

As a consequence, Ding chose Aviation Mechanics and Electrical Equipment Maintenance as his major because he found it to be relevant to his previous dream of being a pilot. He then dreamt of becoming a chief engineer, whose salary would be very considerable and this would change his family situation. He therefore invested significantly in English, which was one of the requirements for being a chief engineer.

However, when he graduated from college and worked in an airport, he found his salary was poor and it would be a long upward climb to become a chief engineer. He had no time to wait because there he urgently needed to earn money and contribute to maintaining his entire family, even if he knew if he continued working and studying English, his dream of being a chief engineer might eventually come true. He felt he had to give up his current job and find a job that had nothing to do with his major and

his English. Eventually, for Ding, it seemed that English was not likely to become a valuable form of cultural capital.

7.2 The variation of views on English

Of all the participants in this study, Ding pays the most attention to his English learning among all the participants. His perception of English acquisition as a kind of valuable cultural capital changes in particular reference to one event. Ding offers two different attitudes before and after one event - the pilot recruitment. Before this event, he is convinced that the most significant issue for him is trying his best in the science subjects. He firmly believes a traditional Chinese saying “Math, Physics and Chemistry are the strongest powers to the world.” So, at the beginning, he paid little attention to English learning.

Extract 15 (LOC_D_20130511)

霆: 你也知道, 在你教我的前两年里, 我的英语不怎么好.....虽然你一直鼓励我, 也严格要求我.....但那时我想的是英语不是那么重要吧, 我保持中等水平就可以啦! 不是有句话叫做 “学好数理化, 走遍天下都不怕嘛”, 哈哈.....

01. D- As you know, my English was not good enough during the first and second year when you were my English teacher...
02. Although you often encouraged me and were strict with me...
03. all I thought then was English was not so important and it was enough that I had an average level of English.
04. It is always said “Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry are the strongest powers to the world.” How...how...

When he mentioned that, he paused for several moments and was a bit embarrassed. His laugh aimed to release his embarrassment and show some certain extent of self-mockery. The reason is that at the time when he talked about his past, he had

totally changed his mind and felt that English played a significant role in his life. What made him change his mind so radically was the pilot recruitment.

In China, every year the pilot recruitment is held among the secondary school and college students. Once one passes the tests and becomes a pilot, he/she will be seen as a hero. So the tests are incredibly difficult and grueling. The tests include the following eight stages in total:

Stage 1. Getting the qualification for recruitment.

Stage 2. Passing an initial physical examination that includes gripping force, blood pressure, heart, lungs, kidney, vision check, chromoscopy, eye check, and ear-nose-throat.

Stage 3. If the initial physical exam is passed, a much more indepth physical examination consisting of one hundred and fifty tests in total is done.

Stage 4. Psychology test.

Stage 5. Political vetting.

Stage 6. Academic subject examination with a focus on mathematics and English.

Stage 7. Another physical re-examination.

Stage 8. Enrolment.

Ding passed the first five examinations and failed at the sixth one because his English did not meet the required standards. This failure was a thunderbolt out of a clear sky for him and he suffered a long-term depression. At that time, I was his English teacher. Though his English was not good, we still had a good relationship. So he came to me many times and each time he would cry and talk about how he regretted not investing more in English. However, following that incident, he made a significant investment in English learning. He frequently came to my office to consult me about many questions and even asked me to offer supplementary instruction during the weekends. Despite this newly-found interest and investment in English, even after he went to college, he still felt regret about his low English acquisition.

Extract 16 (LF2F_D_JOB_20131201)

滕：你的飞行员梦，现在还觉得遗憾吗？

霆：当然。那对我是个多么大的打击啊。你知道吗，我几乎已经触摸到它了。它那么近我觉得我几乎已经抓住了。但是，我摔下来了，从天堂到地狱。当时我甚至想我的余生都不会有色彩了。直到现在，我都在后悔为什么不好好学英语呢！很多个睡不着的夜里，我都会想到这件事情。如果我当初好好学习英语，如果……可是这个世上没有“如果”，唉……

01. T- Are you still sorry about your pilot dream?

02. D- Of course. It was a big blow for me.

03. You know, I almost reached my dream.

04. It was so close that I felt I almost caught it.

05. But I fell down, from heaven to hell.

06. At that moment, I even thought there would be no color for my rest life.

07. Even now, I regret not devoting myself to English.

08. During many nights, when I can't sleep, I will think about it.

09. If only I had worked hard on English! If only……

10. But there is no “if” in the world. Ah……

The unsuccessful experience in pilot recruitment was a crucial blow for him that made him feel like he had fallen “from heaven to hell” and that there was “no color for my rest life” (line 05-06, Extract 16 above). Furthermore, this experience was a turning point in regards to his attitude towards English. From this experience, he learned that English could have been the ‘bridge’ to his dream of becoming a pilot. So he felt upset and regretted for a long term (line 07, Extract 16 above) his lack of investment in this potential capital. As a consequence his perception of whether English could be a valuable form of cultural capital varied considerably since then.

When he graduated from high school, Ding chose Aviation mechanics and electrical equipment maintenance as his major in Xi'an Aeronautical University. In his interview, he told me that even if he could not be a pilot he was still eager to do any work related to planes. As we have seen, at his college, he had devoted much time and energy to English learning in the hopes of becoming a pilot. In extract 3, Ding underscores his dedication to English learning and how lucky he felt that his English teacher helped him a lot during this studies at college.

Extract 17 (LF2F_D_CEL_20131201)

滕：你现在的英语怎么样？

霆：比以前好多了，我花了不少功夫。

滕：你都花了哪些功夫啊？

霆：很多啊，啊，这真是段痛苦的经历。你也知道的，我英语基础不好。谢天谢地，我现在的英语老师人很好知识也渊博，他给了我很多帮助。所以，我现在有点进步了吧，嗯，有进步了。

01.T- How is you English now?

02. D- It is much better than before. I have worked on it a lot.

03. T- What have you done to study English?

04. D- A lot. Oh, it is a painful experience.

05. You know, my English was so poor before.

06. Thanks goodness, my English teacher is kind and erudite.

07. He offers me great help. So, I have made improvement...yes, I have.

Ding highlights that his English teacher was kind and erudite and gave him much help (line 06-07, Extract 17 above), bringing out the importance of intersubjective positioning in regards to learning investment. With both his own effort and his teacher's help, he improved in English learning and it seemed that his personal development became more promising.

7.3 The influence of Ding's identity

From Ding's experience, it can easily be found that the pilot recruitment is the turning point of his attitude about the importance of English. That being a pilot attracts him so much is because of his family to a large degree. Ding was born in a poor family. His mother is disabled and his father is very weak because of a long-term illness. With the upbringing of Ding and his younger brother, the cost of raising them pushed his poor family further into poverty. In China, because of an imperfect social security system, families like Ding's must live an impoverished life. His identity as the oldest son implies that Ding has to bear the duty of looking after his parents and younger brother. During his upbringing, he always felt ashamed and humbled among his peers because of this.

Extract 18 (LOC_D_20130618)

滕：能不能说一下你的家庭情况？

霆：……（长时间的沉默），唉……好吧，我妈妈是个残疾人，她腿不好。我爸爸身体不好也不能做生活，我还有一个弟弟。

滕：你似乎很少提起你的家人。

霆：我想你能理解。我小的时候，我的小伙伴们总是嘲笑我，他们跟在我妈妈的后面学她走路，然后叫我“小瘸子”。我讨厌这个绰号于是就和他们打架，我小时候经常被打得浑身都是伤……（他眼眶发红，拼命抑制住眼泪）

01. T- Would you like to talk about your family?

02. D- Hum……(a long time silence) Ah……(sighing).

03. Ok, my mother is disabled and there is something wrong with her leg.

04. And my father is too weak to do any manual labor. I have a younger brother.

05. T- It seems you seldom to talk about your family.

06. D- I believe you can understand me.

07. When I was young, my peers always laughed at me.

08. They imitated the strange step of my mother and called me “little cripple”.

09. I hated this nickname and fought with them
10. so it was common that I often bore a variety of wounds when I was a child.....
11. (His eyes turn red and he tries his best to hold back his tears.)

There is something wrong with his mother's leg, so when she walks, she always shakes seriously. Ding felt so ashamed about this that he even refused to let his mother attend the parents meeting at his school. The identity as a son of a disabled woman made him sensitive and introverted. He was extremely eager to change this situation, so it could be easily understood what a huge blow for him it was to fail in the pilot recruitment. For him, being a pilot was not only his dream job but also it represented the most effective way to change his identity, which he always felt ashamed of.

Extract 19 (LOC_D_20130618)

霆：你知道吗，我妈妈从来没有参加过我的家长会。

滕：这是她自己的意愿吗？

霆：唉.....不是的，是我。是我不愿意她去参加家长会，我不想别人知道我的家庭情况。

滕：你妈妈对此有什么想法吗？

霆：我不知道.....也许吧，她有点难过.....是的，她挺难过。我也很难受。但是.....我没有其他的选择。(讲这些话的时候他一直低着头，避开我的视线，并且一直在搓手)

01. D- You know what? My mother never attended parents meeting.

02. T- Was that her own will?

03. D- Ah.....It was me.

04. I refused to let her attend parents meeting.

05. I didn't want others to know my family's situation.

06. T- What was your mother's opinion about that?

07. D- I don't know..... Maybe, she was a little sad.....
08. Yes, she was sad. I also feel terrible and am sorry for what I did to her.
09. But.....I have no other option
10. (while talking, he lowers his head to avoid looking at me and keeps rubbing his hands.)

From his words, it can be judged that he had been struggling all the time. He realized his actions would hurt his mother (line 07-08, Extract 19 above) although he refused to admit it at the very beginning. His struggle forms his complex and contradictory character. He is humble, sensitive but he is proud at the same time, sometimes even pretentious. He has been trying his best in his studies and has obtained good academic grades which acts as a kind of weapon against the people who look down upon him.

Extract 20 (LOC_D_20130816)

霆：从我很小的时候，我就发誓要好好学习，上一个好的大学，这样的话，我毕业之后就能找到个工作来赚钱养活我的家人。对我来说，既没有有权势的亲朋好友，也没有钱。所以，这是我唯一的出路了。总有一天，我要让那些看不起我的人羡慕我并且为曾经嘲笑我而后悔。我一定会的！相信我！

01. D- When I was very young, I swore to study hard and go to a good university.
02. When I graduate, I could find a good job to earn money to take care of my family.
03. For me, I don't have powerful relatives or friends to help us and we lack money. 04. This is the only way and I have no choice.
05. One day I will make the people who always laughed at me envy me
06. and regret looking down upon me!
07. I will!
08. Believe me!

Most of time when we communicated, Ding enjoyed talking in this way and he kept encouraging himself (line 07-08, Extract 20 above). And he is very sensitive so when he communicated with me about his family, he kept watching my reaction closely, especially while he talked about his mother. He did not continue the topic until he saw that I did not react differently about his mother's disability. He did not accept either disdainful nor sympathetic views about his family; he insisted upon being treated as 'normal'.

Ding's sense of identity is closely tied to the way in which his classmates perceived him. As Norton (2015) has pointed out, some learners, despite being highly motivated, may feel excluded from the practices of a classroom and in time be positioned as a 'poor' or unmotivated learner. In opposition to this, Ding's way of gaining confidence is through getting good academic grades by studying hard. It is his way of compensating for his lack of other kind of capitals. He has recognized that the capital that can be possessed must be through his own effort. He can work hard to gain cultural capital which can not only bring economical as well as social capital to pull his whole family from the morass of poverty, but can also act as protection against the people who looked down upon him.

Extract 21 (LF2F_D_FAM_20131201)

滕：你一直都努力学习，这也和你的家庭有关吗？

霆：是，你也知道我的家境。我必须承担起照顾父母和弟弟的责任。要想改善我的家境，除了努力学习进入好大学找到好工作之外别无出路。

01. T: You work very hard. Does this have any relation to your family?

02. D: Yes, you know the situation of my family.

03. I have to bear the duty of looking after my parents and my younger brother.

04. I have no choice but to study hard in order to go to a good university

05. and find a good job to improve the situation of my family.

Thus, for Ding, being successful in the pilot recruitment seemed like an emergency ladder to change his despairing situation. But he failed, after passing a series of tests just because his English was not good enough. Not until then did he realize English acquisition could be a vital kind of cultural capital. He began to invest in English and believed that the college education was the only way to change both his economic and social status (line 04, Extract 21 above).

7.4 The variation of identity

After he was enrolled in the college, Ding became a bit more confident. He made some new friends, even got a girlfriend, and got along well with his professors.

Extract 22 (LOC_D_20130411)

滕：你的大学生活怎么样啊？

霆：不错啊，呃……呃……我还……我还交了女朋友的。所以……挺好的，哈哈……（笑）

……

霆：我现在的英语老师好棒的，当然，你也很棒。我甚至觉得我简直是遇到了一个外国人。你明白我的意思吗？我的意思是他的英语简直就像是母语一样！姐，我觉得他要比你厉害一点点哦，哈哈……别介意哈，开个玩笑。

01. T- How is your college life?

02. D- Not bad. Er...er...

03. I've got a ... a girlfriend. So...so it's good. How...(laughs)

……

04. D- My current English teacher is amazing!

05. Of course, you are amazing, too.

06. I even feel that I met a foreigner!

07. Do you know what I mean?

08. I mean his English is as good as native speaker!
09. Dear sister, I think he is a bit better than you. How....how...(laugh loudly)
10. Don't mind, just kidding.
11. He had studied in Australia. Hmm...he helps me a lot.

Extract 23 (LF2F_D_JOB_20131201)

霆：我现在学得英语和高中时不一样了，主要是专业方面的，比如机械啊引擎啊维修啊，对我来说有点难，但是我会尽力的，因为如果想成为总工程师英语好是必须的。你知道总工程师的年薪是多少吗？啧啧.....差不多要一百多万呢，呀，真是太厉害啦！（说这些话的时候他双眼闪光）

滕：总工程师的要求是什么啊

霆：哦，好多要求的。工程师分很多级的，最高级别就是总工程师，对于工作经验啊，专业知识啊等等都有要求。还得通过一系列的考试。当然，英语也得好啊，因为好多飞机配件都是进口的，说明书也是英文的。

滕：想成为一个总工程师得花多长时间呢？

霆：至少得十年多吧，好难的。但是，一旦成功了，我所有的问题，比如说我父母啊，我弟啊，还有所有与钱有关的事情就都可以解决了。

01. D-The English I learned now is different from the one in secondary school.
02. It is mainly about my profession, such as about machines, engines or maintenance.
03. It is a bit difficult for me,
04. but I will do my best because English is necessary if I want to be the chief engineer.
05. Do you know how much the salary is?
06. Aha, the yearly salary is up to one million yuan (approximately 200,000 euros).
07. Oh, how amazing it is! (His eyes are shining while talking.)
08. T: What are the requirement of being a chief engineer?
09. D: Oh, there are so many requirements.

10. There are many grades of engineer, and the top one is chief engineer.
11. It is related to one's working experience, professional knowledge etc.
12. What's more, I must pass a series of tests.
13. Of course, your English must be good enough,
14. because many aircraft accessories are imported from abroad so the instructions are all in English.
15. T: How long will it take to be a chief engineer?
16. D: More than ten years, at least.
17. It is a long and tough path.
18. But once I am successful,
19. all my problems, for instant, my parents, my brother and everything related to money, will be solved.

Obviously, there is a long path before he can become a chief engineer. But that gives him a forceful motivation to carry on. And in this stage in his life, he has become more outgoing and optimistic. When we met together, Ding had changed a lot. For example, when he mentioned his current English teacher was amazing, he added "Of course, you are amazing, too." (line 04 and 09, Extract 22 above). It indicates that he has begun to care about other's feelings and is learning to get along with others. And he insisted on calling me "sister" rather than "Miss Teng" as before and jokes with me, such as saying his current English teacher is better than me –something he could not have said while at his secondary school (line 09 and 10, Extract 22 above). As mentioned by Firth and Wenger (2007), learning is a social process. Ding's English learning is an interactive activity between him as an individual and his surrounding environment. As his surroundings as well as his community changed, his social capital became better. For Ding, he was not simply finding and discovering the world through English, but it also served as a means to construct new social interaction between himself and his surroundings. All these variations are due to his release from the anxiety of his poor family along with the breadth of his vision in college and the help

of his teachers. He seems to recognize his own development in the interview.

Extract 24 (LF2F_D_FAM_20131201)

滕: 你还介意别人提起你的家庭状况吗?

霆: 嗯.....不太介意.....(停了一下) 你也知道,我长大了。这不是我的错.....也不是我父母的错。没有人可以选择自己的家庭出身。而且,他们爱我,我的父母很爱我,这就足够了。你知道吗,我的很多同学也知道我妈妈身患残疾,但没人笑话我,至少当面没有。他们也都是大学生了,不会那么幼稚了。我的老师也一直教育我们说:英雄不问出处。

01. T- Do you still mind others mentioning your family situation?

02. D- Hmm... not so much...(pause).

03. You know, I have grown up.

04. It is not my fault...and it is not my parents' fault.

05. Nobody can choose their family. And... they love me.

06. My parents do love me. That's enough.....

07. Do you know, most of my classmates know about my mum's disability but nobody laughs at me, at least in front of me.

08. They are college students and they are not childish.

09. My teacher always tells us: Even a hero might have humble beginning.

With his teacher's help and his own growth, Ding seemed to get rid of the shadow which had hung over him for a long time. He has repositioned himself within the systemic patterns of control and his newer identity as a college student offered him the self-confidence to face dilemmas and improve both his life and his English learning.

7.5 Work place

After he graduated from college, Ding was employed as maintenance personnel in Chengdu Shuangliu International Airport. At the very beginning, he was very excited

about it because it seemed he was on the way to becoming a chief engineer and it was very likely he could be the hero who saved his family. However, after several months, he became upset. As a 'green hand', he was asked to do the non-technological and toughest tasks, which made him tired and upset.

Extract 25 (LOC_D_20150317)

霆：我简直想要辞职了。

滕：为什么？

霆：我很累也很失望，这似乎不是我梦想中的工作，这个工作和工程师一点关系也没有，甚至跟维修都没有关系。什么关系都没有！

滕：发生什么事情了？

霆：他们总是叫我做最重的活。比如说搬设备、搬配件，清洗配件啊。这些都根本不需要技术嘛。更糟糕的是，我的工资也少得可怜，养活我自己都难，更别提养活我家人了。

滕：这只是开始。你也说过只要你成为总工程师，一切就都好了。

霆：别再提总工程师了。我知道那个是好工作，但是我等不起了。它可望而不可及，对于我来说，它就像镜中月水中花.....我所做的一切都是徒劳的.....我压力好大，我需要钱.....我打算再坚持一年，毕竟我还是想成为一名工程师的，我不想轻易放弃。一年后如果情形依旧没有改观，我就辞职。然后去做与金融有关的工作，我听说那个工作赚钱快。

.....

滕：你有没有觉得学习英语是一种浪费？毕竟，到目前为止，在你的工作中，英语没有起到作用。

霆：有点吧.....也许，以后能用得着。计划不如变化快嘛！

滕：你还会继续对英语学习投入投入吗？

霆：嗯.....很难讲。我不想就这么放弃英语，但是我怕我没有时间学习。但是我明白掌握一门外语是一件好事情，很有可能以后会很有用，说不定我还能靠它找份工作，谁知道呢！

01. D- I almost wanted to quit.
02. T- Why?
03. D- I was so tired and upset. It seemed far away from my dream job.
04. All that I did had nothing to do with engineering, only a maintenance personnel,
05. nothing!
06. T- What happened?
07. D- I was asked to do the toughest tasks,
08. for example, conveying the heavy equipment and accessories, cleaning them.
09. None of it needed any technique at all.
10. What's more, as a beginner, my salary was too poor to support myself,
11. let alone my family.
12. T- It was just a beginning. You always said once you become a chief engineer,
everything will be OK.
13. D- Do not mention chief engineer any more, please.
14. I know it is a dream job, but I don't have time to wait.
15. It is too far to reach.
16. For me, it looks like the moon in the water and the flower in the mirror.....
17. What I have done is in vain
18.I am stressed and I need money.....
19. I intend to persist one more year.
20. After all, working on planes is my dream job even though I can't be a pilot.
21. I can't give it up easily.
22. If the situation doesn't change within a year,
23. I will quit this job and to take a job in finance
24. because I have heard that that is a kind of job where you can earn money
quickly.
-
25. T- Do you think learning English is a kind of waste?
Because it hasn't offered any help in your work until now.

26. D- Somewhat. Maybe in the future, I can use it.
27. Changes can happen any time and everywhere.
28. T- Will you continue investing in English?
29. D- Hum... It is hard to say.
30. I don't want to give English up but I am afraid I don't have time to invest in it.
31. I believe mastering a foreign language is a good thing and it is very probable that in the future it would help me.
32. Maybe English would offer me a job to support my family, who knows?

It is evident that Ding is irritable when he talks about his current job. But his attitude should be understood with reference to his identity: he is the oldest son who bears the responsibility of taking care of his whole family. At this point, his identities are contradictory: the green hand needs time to get to the top position but the oldest son of a poor family can't wait. During the struggle, he even bemoaned that what he learned was in vain, including his investment in English.

7.6 Comment

Due to new and different systemic patterns of control in Ding's workplace, his intersubjective positioning shifts yet again and he no longer sees the direct affordances that investing in English learning can bring him although he still persists in his studies. Returning to the notion of 'niche' as a place to act in a language (Menezes, 2011), we can see by Ding's words that he does not intersubjectively position himself as belonging to this particular language niche once he has a job as airplane mechanic.

Ding is one of the participants whose positioning seems to change the most. For a long time, Ding never viewed English acquisition as a kind of cultural capital. When he was in secondary school he perceived it as unimportant until he failed in the pilot recruitment testing. After that, he realized that English played a critical role as a

necessary condition to help him make his dream come true but he still did not conceive it as a kind of capital.

Later, during his college life, and realizing that he could not become a pilot, Ding still invested much more in English in order to become a chief engineer. Intersubjectively, Ding seemed to position himself as a possible member of the discourse community (Menezes, 2011). In his eyes, English acquisition could offer access to this job, which, in turn could help his family get out of poverty. Currently, in his workplace, although English acquisition seems useless, he believes future English acquisition may offer a job, which means he now conceives English as a potential (although indirect and rather vague) cultural capital that can bring economic capital for him and he would like to continue investing in English.

It is intriguing to consider whether Ding was motivated or unmotivated to learn English. In the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972), instrumental motivation references the desire that language learners have to learn a second language for utilitarian purposes, such as employment. So he still has instrumental motivation to learn English (eager to be a chief engineer) but due to his complex social history and multiple desires, Ding's investment in English varies according to his shifting identities and we can see that he currently perceives English as holding potential affordances as well as a means to social, cultural and economic capital. Ding also appears to be somewhat conflicted concerning how he is treated by an educational system that is implicitly based on 'meritocracy'.

This argument that the 'deserving' will inevitably 'rise' to the top and thus ensure that 'the best' individuals will be appointed to posts of responsibility is based on educational performance, placing the onus of failure upon the individuals who do not attain high levels of educational performance. Meritocracy does not take into account institutional and structural barriers to success, or the lack of access to the

social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1993) that is embedded in the habitus of those more advantaged groups that generally succeed in educational performance. (...) The role of education is not to equip all individuals with the abilities, skills, and understanding to become fulfilled members of society, indeed, in order for some to succeed, others must necessarily fail – thus creating institutionalized and codified (and ‘rationalised’) failures, and thereby justifying discriminatory practices against specific social groups. Poor educational attainment is used to justify lack of success in the employment market: educational failures have only themselves to blame. (Ross, Dooly, Hartsmar, 2012, p. 122)

Yet despite Ding’s acute sense of disadvantage (his positioning towards the inequalities of the social welfare system that makes him responsible for his family’s well-being, his sense of injustice at the hands of his peers, his awareness that being a ‘green-hand’ implies getting all the onerous tasks), Ding continues to be willing to invest in English learning. This is remarkable as, different from Lily and Serena (seen in the previous chapters), his language acquisition has delivered no tangible benefits. For Lily, English was converted into a job that requires her knowledge on a daily basis (English language teacher), for Serena, English positioned in the role of language broker for foreign patients, earning her the praise of her superior and similarly she was a translator in her parents’ factory. But for Ding, there are no such affordances and yet he continues to believe that this investment will eventually pay off – leading to the conclusion that he is also intersubjectively positioning himself to the implicit power infrastructure of the supposed meritocracy in place in China (but which has been proven to be false as social and cultural capital of who-you-are and who-you-know still play key roles in acquiring jobs and education).

Along these lines, the chart below shows a graphic summary of Ding’s perceived benefits, his intersubjective positionings and the systemic patterns of control which all contribute to his changing identities and investment in English.

Table 5. Summary of Ding's affordances, positions, patterns of control and tensions

| Participant | Affordances/Perceived benefits | Intersubjective positionings | Systemic patterns of control | Tensions |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Ding (as secondary school learner) | None, focused on Maths, Physics and Chemistry | Hard sciences oriented learner | Rigorous pilot recruitment | Regret for lack of investment in language learning; ashamed of his background while at the same time ashamed of his embarrassment of his family |
| Ding (aviation mechanics student) | 'Protection' against people who ridiculed him; access to chief engineer status; economic resources for himself and his family | Invested language learner; confident and out-going | Rigid social class; lack of access to social and cultural capital due to family circumstances | Hard-working student with aims to gain access to same groups that have shunned him |
| Ding (as mechanical maintenance at airport) | Not relevant for his job; perhaps for an unknown future job | Dissatisfied in his job; demotivated about possibility of promotion to chief engineer; shifts motivated individual who can use learning for upward mobility & frustrated individual with uncertain future | Low-paying, manual job; lack of opportunities for upward promotion & upward mobility | Job does not require the skills he has spent time learning; lack of time to continue studying |

Chapter 8 Cherry

8.1 Cherry's Story

Cherry was the English delegate in her class when I taught her. In most of the tests she got the highest score in the class. As it will be shown, this is arguably due to the investment she made in the learning process and in the classroom social practices as well as to her parents' social capital. Her father used to be a civil servant in Chengdu city (the capital of Sichuan Province, where the Bright Secondary School is located) at the Bureau of Education (which is an agency run by the government) and her mother worked in the local government.

Cherry started her English learning when she was in third grade of primary school in Chengdu. Before she moved to the small town where the research-setting school is located, she lived with her parents in Chengdu. Her parents believed that English acquisition was closely tied to future resources. Moreover, Cherry has always intended to go abroad to seek further education, so English acquisition is necessary for her. Both Cherry and her parents have deeply invested in her English learning: her parents sent her to private lessons run by Shanghai JiaoTong University in Shanghai; provided her with many English reference book; Cherry spends at least two hours daily on studying English, and so on.

After she finished her study in primary school, Cherry had to return to her father's hometown since her father had been offered a transfer to Dongchang city which is a remote city and lies in the south of Gansu province. Gansu Province lies in the north-west of China and is one of the most under-developed provinces in China so the educational level there is much lower than in Sichuan. These two provinces are shown in the following map.

Figure 4. The location of Cherry and her parents



Notes: the green circle is where her father used to work, the red circle is where her father works now (it is such a small city that it does not show up on this map)

Her parents decided to send her to her father's hometown to go to Bright Secondary School and be taken care of by her grandparents. It is obvious that Cherry would suffer from lower educational standards than when she was in Chengdu (the capital city of Sichuan Province). However, most significantly, because of her father's work transfer she could get *hukou* in Gansu, which meant she could attend the Chinese National College Entrance Examination (often abbreviated as CNCEE, short for College Entrance Examination) or *gaokao* in the Gansu province when she graduated from senior high school because her permanent residency permit or *hukou* was in the Gansu province.

As has already been discussed in the introduction in Chapter 1, due to the endemic discrimination related to the administration of the CNCEE, different regions have different examination papers and admission cut-off numbers, according to the economic and cultural development of the province. In general, the examination in the north-western provinces is easier while the admission standards in the north-western

provinces are lower than other parts. This regionally preferential policy does provide subsidies to students from under-developed regions that enjoy limited educational resources, such as Tibet and Xinjiang. Gansu province is one of the under-developed regions so the admission cut-off standards are lower than Sichuan.

For Cherry, this means she can have priority in *gaokao* because she can get more advanced education in Sichuan while taking an easier examination in Gansu, which is impossible for her classmates in Sichuan because according to the Ministry of Education, all students must take the *gaokao* exam in the county to which their original *hukou* belongs. Putting Cherry's conditions in terms of Bourdieu's theory of capital, it is her social capital that affords her these privileges. Bourdieu claims that "one has to take account of all the characteristics of social condition which are (statistically) associated from earliest childhood with possession of high or low income and which tend to shape tastes adjusted to these conditions." (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 177)

So, we can see that Cherry's father's education and job gave her the possibility to enter a better university. Moreover, during the interviews Cherry mentions that her uncle had previously moved to America and whenever he returned to China, Cherry liked communicating in English with him. Her uncle would correct her pronunciation and introduce her to American customs, all which encouraged her to have an ambition to go abroad. After she graduated from the secondary school, her father activated all his *guanxi* to get her enrolled into a top foreign senior high school which offered a number of opportunities to go abroad for its students.

For this study, following the tracks of Cherry's English learning trajectory, her identity cannot be ignored. As with the other participants in this study, her identity has changed across time and space. In the Chengdu city, Cherry was an ordinary pupil in English learning whereas she became an extraordinary middle school student at Bright Secondary School. The changing of her identity translated, to some degree, in greater confidence, which impacted her English learning significantly. After she

transferred to Bright Secondary School, she left her parents to live with her grandparents. Whilst living with her parents, she was an extroverted girl and treated her parents as friends. She loved to play games with her parents and shared her secrets with them. What's more, her parents were able to supervise her study. While living with her grandparents, she became a little more introverted and found there was little in common between her and her grandparents, which made her upset and impeded her English learning –perhaps missing her parents' support and supervision. As a result, she found she had to make more investment in English on her own, including time, energy and money.

8.2 Cherry as a 'good student': Forming foundations in Chengdu

Cherry is a typical 'good student' in most teachers' views. She is hardworking and studious. Her academic grades are high and she has a good relationship with many teachers. All her current success in school must be understood with reference to her personal experience in Chengdu (the capital city of Sichuan). Before she transferred to Bright Secondary School, she lived with her parents in Chengdu city and spent her primary school time in this developed and prosperous city. Her family background (daughter of parents who work for the government) offered her a significant amount of resources. For example, she started to learn English when she was in third grade in primary school.

Extract 26 (LOC_C_20130606)

滕：你什么时候开始学习英语？

希：我小学三年级的时候就开始学习英语了。当时我和我的父母住在成都。

01. T- When did you start your English learning?

02. C- I started my English learning when I was in third grade in primary school.

03. At that time, I lived with my parents in Chengdu.

This opportunity shaped and set the foundation for Cherry's English learning. After she transferred to Bright Secondary School, she gained academic success easier than her classmates, most of whom could not get access to English until they went to secondary school. Moreover, her parents sent her to Shanghai (a developed city in the east of China) to attend private English instruction run by the Shanghai JiaoTong University during her holidays.

Extract 27 (LF2F_C_FAM_20131205)

滕：看起来你的父亲很关注你的成长。

希：是的.....我的父母曾经在假期的时候把我送到上海的一个英语培训中心，这个培训中心是由上海交通大学管理的。

01. T- It seems that your parents paid a lot of attention to your development.

02. C- Yes...They have even sent me to private instruction in Shanghai run by Shanghai Jiao Tong University (a top 5 university in China) during the holidays...

In summary, all the prior opportunities of English learning for Cherry are related to her social capital that her father, an official government employee, has access to, which her peers are not able to achieve. Moreover, due to her father's working experience and his educational background, he was aware of the value of English for Cherry. So both Cherry and her parents held a mutual belief that English was and is important and useful for her future. In particular Cherry's parents seemed to be fully aware of the systemic patterns of control established in the Chinese education system and have instilled in Cherry a similar intersubjective positioning towards investment in the language learning process. That is, they all perceive English as a potential access to a valuable form of cultural capital.

8.3 Cherry as a 'good student': Developing further in Bright Secondary School

Extract 28 (LOC_C_20130629)

滕：你为什么转学到光明中学呢？

希：因为我的父母调到了甘肃省一个偏远的小城市，你也知道，甘肃好落后的。当地的教育状况不太好，我的父母怕影响我学习，所以决定把我送回这里。这里是我爸爸的老家。他们觉得虽然这只是个乡镇，但是比起甘肃的那个小城市，教育水平还是好多了。

滕：那现在是谁在照顾你呢？

希：我的爷爷奶奶，我爸爸是四川人。

01. T- Why did you transfer to Bright Secondary School?

02. C- Because my parents were transferred to a remote city in Gansu Province.

03. You know, Gansu is very remote and the local educational station is not good.

04. My parents were afraid that it would impede my study.

05. Finally they decided to send me to this town and study in Bright Secondary School.

06. It is my father's hometown.

07. They believed although this was only a small town,

08. the educational level here was much better than the small city in Gansu Province.

09. T- Who are taking care of you now?

10. C- My grandparents.

As it has already been explained, the Sichuan province is more underdeveloped than the eastern regions. However, it is more developed both economically and in terms of education than the remote small city where her parents were transferred. Once in Bright Secondary School, the research-setting rural school in Sichuan Province, Cherry was able to draw from her previous English studies to stand out among the other students. She was already familiar with the subject and was very active in class resulting in the teacher appointing her as the English delegate. This, in turn, stimulated her desire to improve her English and gave her more self-confidence.

Extract 29 (LOC_C_20130730)

滕：你认为你的英语基础对你现在的英语学习有帮助吗？

希：当然啦，我对我现在所学的东西比较熟悉了，所以表现的比我的同伴们要稍稍好一点。呵……并且我现在是英语课代表，这让我感觉很不错呢。

01. T- Do you think that your English foundation helps you in your English learning now?

02. C- Certainly.

03. I am familiar with what I am learning now so I perform a little better than my peers. Ha... (laughs)

04. And I was appointed to be the English delegate in my class.

05. That makes me feel good.

Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant and Mihic (2004) argue that affective factors influence language acquisition and achievement, noting that self-confidence arises from positive experiences in the context of the second language. However, as it has already been pointed out, this study does not look at motivation as “a character trait of the individual language learner” because doing so tends to ignore “unequal relations of power between language learners and target language speakers” (Norton, blog post, 4 February 2013). In the case of Cherry, she clearly aligned to the teaching practices of the classroom, investing in the community of the language learning classroom and in her identity as a good student. The advantages she brought to the English classroom in the form of symbolic resources such as early exposure to the target language, educational opportunities in the target language, strong parent support, etc.) helped contribute to her self-confidence as an English language learner, in particular when she compares herself with her peers (line 02-03, Extract 29 above).

8.4 Acknowledgement of capital: Priority of English learning and direction in the future

Apart from the parental support, Cherry's social and cultural capital played an important role in her English learning, as seen above. Moreover, during the interview, Cherry continuously highlights her father's role and how he paid considerable attention to his daughter's development. Cherry mentioned her father gave her books in English to improve her English learning and her development. Her father also wanted her to appreciate English movies and so watched them in original version with her. Although the dialogues in the movies were difficult to understand for her, Cherry recognizes that the experience improved her command of English (lines 06-08, below) even if the genre of movies selected by her father were not her favorites (lines 02-03).

Extract 30 ((LF2F_C_HOB_20131205)

滕: 你喜欢什么样的电影或者电视剧?

希: 我喜欢偶像剧。但是我爸爸喜欢英语电影, 尤其是英文原版电影。每次我要求看翻译版的, 他总是拒绝。他老说原版的才是真正的电影, 所以我也不得不跟着看了。但是对我而言很多对白我都看不懂, 所以不得不借助中文字幕。.....事实上, 有时候我能听懂一些单词和少量句子, 这真是太棒了。有时候, 我还能学到点单词, 每次看完电影之后, 我发现我的发音就有点进步并且听力也有所提高。

01. T- What kind of TV content do you like?

02. C- Celebrity drama is my favorite.

03. But my father prefers English movies, especially in original version.

04. Every time I asked him to watch the dubbed version, he would refuse.

05. He always said only the original version can show the authenticity of the movies.

06. So, I had to follow him. But for me it was hard to catch all the dialogue and I had to turn to the Chinese subtitle.

07. In fact, sometimes I could catch several words or sentences and it was great.

08. Sometimes I could even learn some new words.
09. After watching English movies in original version,
10. I found my pronunciation became better. And it improved my listening.

Additionally, whenever she met foreigners, her parents would encourage her to communicate with them. At very beginning, she felt shy and just said “hello” to them. But after a few times, she became outgoing and could talk with them more. Also, as has been previously discussed, Cherry has an uncle who has been settled in America for many years and this had an important impact on her. Her uncle returns to China once a year and sometimes he likes to communicate with her in English to promote her learning. He has introduced her to the customs in America, which provoked a great interest in her as regards going abroad, including a desire to go to an America university in the future. This appears to corroborate Norton’s (2013) argument that

if learners “invest” in the target language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic resources (language, education, friendship) and material resources (capital goods, real estate, money), which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power. As the value of language learners’ cultural capital increases, so learners’ sense of themselves, their hopes for the future, and their imagined identities are reassessed. (Norton, blogpost, 4 February 2013).

Cherry has several friends in her class, most of whom have high academic grades and who are considered ‘popular girls’. This group of girls help each other in English learning. They often share the girls’ secrets in English in front of their parents to protect their privacy. We discussed in chapter 2 that cultural capital is highly symbolic and has tangible effects. Cherry and her friends shared cultural capital (similar tastes in fashion, attending the same activities) and it helped create collective identities for them. In her interview, looking back on this phase of her life, Cherry also underscores

how she dreamt of traveling and she that it was her belief that English would be practical for her journeys (Extract 31, below). In this discussion, Cherry highlights here intersubjective positioning of ‘belonging’ to a community of language speakers with whom she shares similar ‘habitus’ (the popular girls), including the use of English as a means of including some and excluding others.

Extract 31 (LF2F_C_CEL_20131205)

滕：有没有一些特别的人影响你的英语学习呢？

希：有啊，我有一个叔叔，他在美国定居多年了，他差不多一年回来一次。他的时候和我用英语聊天以检查我的英语学习状况,他的口语好棒。他还向我介绍美国的一些风俗习惯，我觉得好有趣。我都打算以后去美国读大学了。还有我的朋友也会对我的英语有影响，我们几个女生的英语都还算可以吧，我们会经常互相帮助，一起讨论。有时候，我们会用英语说我们的“小秘密”，尤其是在父母面前，这样，我们就可以保护我们的隐私啦！

01. T- Did any particular people influence your learning of English?

02. C- Yes. I have an uncle who has been settled in the USA for many years now.

03. Whenever he returned to China to visit, sometimes he would like to communicate with me in English to check my level of English.

04. His oral English is very good.

05. He is the one who introduced me to the interesting customs in America.

06. I have a plan to go to an American university.

07. Besides my uncle, I think my friends have an effect on my English learning.

08. We helped each other in English learning.

09. We did our homework together and discussed it.

10. When we talked about our little girls’ secrets, we always spoke in English,

11. especially in front of our parents so that nobody would discover our secrets and we could protect our privacy.

Extract 32 (LOC_C_20130916)

滕：你认为学习英语有哪些益处？

希：至少，我去到其他国家的时候不会迷路！我一直想去巴黎，我知道在巴黎人们说法语，但是据说英语在巴黎用英语也能交流。至少会有一些人能听懂，总比说中文要好吧！有人还告诉我英语在好多国家都可以用呢。

01. T- What benefits do you expect from learning English?

02. C- At least, when I travel in foreign countries, I will not get lost!

03. I have always wanted to go to Paris.

04. I know in Paris people speak French but I have heard that I can communicate with people in English in Paris.

05. At least, some people can understand me.

06. Anyway, it is much better than if (I communicate with people) in Chinese.
Right?

07. I was even told that I could be understood in many countries if I speak English.

8.5 Identity: Ordinary to extraordinary; daughter to granddaughter

In order to fully understand Cherry's process of English learning, we must look at her changing identities across historical time and social space and how this is told in her lifestory. When she was in Chengdu city, she had a feeling that she was not outstanding in English. In her interview, Cherry recalls that when parents discussed her studies with their friends, and in particular when asked about Cherry's English, their response was "Just so-so" (in Chinese, "一般"). After she transferred to Sichuan, their evaluation of her English changed to "It is OK" (in Chinese "还好。"). Bearing in mind that in Chinese tradition, parents seldom praise children directly (customs call for modesty; which is considered a virtue), the comment "It is OK" from her parents is, in fact, very high praise. This change of assessment by her parents still makes her feel very proud (extract 8 below).

In this same extract, Cherry brings out another point which is related to understanding her changing identity as a learner: the fact that she was the English delegate in her class. This position signaled a kind of responsibility that she recognized; she had to set an example for her classmates and perform better than others, thereby further promoting her investment in English language learning. Cherry obviously felt this sense of duty deeply: “In that case, I had to set an example for my classmates. If my English was not good enough, my classmates would think that I am not competent for this position. That would be so shameful. That’s why I devoted so much time to English.” In fact, it was revealed in the interview that Cherry spent at least two hours on English every day, apart from the time in class. In the morning, she read the assigned words and texts for an hour and memorized the new words in the afternoon. And before going to bed, she always read some interesting English stories.

Cherry’s identity at this point appears to be closely aligned with a ‘competitive’ spirit of staying on top and she sees English as a means of doing so. She had “to work hard to avoid being caught up with by them” (line 13). Albeit different situations and clearly different systemic patterns of power, Cherry’s positioning is similar to Ding’s in relation to his classmates. While Cherry worked hard at English to stay ahead of the others, Ding worked hard on his studies to demonstrate to his classmates that he was not inferior to them.

Extract 33 (LF2F_C_FAM_20131205)

滕：你的父母会和其他人讨论你的英语学习吗？

希：会啊，他们和朋友聚会时，孩子的学习是他们的主要话题。

滕：他们都如何评价你的英语？

希：最开始他们会说“一般般”。但是最近他们会说“还可以”

滕：对此你感觉如何？

希：有点骄傲吧，这说明我有点进步了吧！

滕：你觉得是什么让他们改变了这个评价？

希：可能是因为我的英语提高了吧，转学到光明中学之后，我经常在班上考第一名。其实我认为主要原因应该是我的同学学英语的时间比我晚，所以我得加油以免被他们赶上了。

滕：那你认为是什么让你的英语进步了呢？

希：因为我有一定的英语基础嘛，所以老师就任命我做英语课代表，我觉得既然我做了课代表，就得起个带头的作用。如果我的英语不够好，我的同学们就会觉得我难以胜任这个工作了，那多丢脸啊，所以我得更加努力地学习它才行。

01. T- Did your parents discuss your English learning with other people?

02. C- Yes. When they had a party with their friends,

03. their children's study was the main topic.

04. T- What did they say about your English?

05. C- At the very beginning, they always said "Just so-so."

06. But recently they would say "It is OK."

07. T- What's your feeling about this?

08. C- A little proud. It means I have made progress.

09. T- What do you think made them change their comment?

10. C- Maybe because my English has improved.

11. After I transferred to Bright Secondary School, it is frequently that I can get the number one in the examination.

12. In fact, I think the reason is that my classmates learn English later than me.

13. So I have to work hard to avoid being caught up with by them.

14. T- In your opinion, what else made your English become better?

15. C- You know, I had studied English before, so my teacher appointed me to be the English delegate in my class.

16. In that case, I had to set an example for my classmates.

17. If my English was not good enough, my classmates would think that I am not competent for this position.

18. That would be so shameful. That's why I devoted so much time to English.

Extract 34 (LOC_C_20131011)

滕：你平常会花多少的时间来学习英语？

希：每天至少两个小时吧，我一般早上读一个小时的单词和课文，下午的时候会记当日所学的新单词，晚上临睡前会读一些有趣的英语小故事。

01. T- How much time did you devote to English learning?

02. C- At least two hours every day besides the English class in school.

03. In summary, I read the words and texts for an hour in the morning and memorized the new words in the afternoon.

04. Before I went to bed, I felt like reading some interesting English stories.

When she moved to the small town and began to live with her grandparents, Cherry's identity as 'dependent child' changed from daughter to granddaughter. As she explained earlier in the interview, she had a close relationship with her parents, they treated each other as good friends and she liked to share her secrets with her parents. As concerns English learning, her parents encouraged her to communicate with foreigners, which made her feel confident using the target language. This inspired her to invest more in her English learning. However, when asked about the relationship with her grandparents, she didn't answer directly; instead she simply said "They take good care of me... they treat me well". It indicates that the relationship with her grandparents is perhaps not as good as the one with her parents. This change in her circumstances also implies less access to resources and possible impediments to her English learning. Cherry admits that she invested less in English at home, once living with her grandparents, as seen in extract 35, below.

Extract 35 (LF2F_C_FAM)

滕：你曾经提到过你和父母的关系不错。

希：非常好。他们把我当成朋友，和我一起玩游戏，我也愿意和他们分享我所有

的一切。

滕：你会和他们讨论英语吗？

希：经常一起讨论。我父母的英语还不错，但是口语很差，所以有时候我爸爸还让我纠正他的发音，哈哈……（笑），很不错，是吧？他们也会监督我的学习，我妈妈就经常检查我的家庭作业。我父母总是鼓励我多练习。每次遇到外国人，他们就要我去和人家交流。我现在发现我和外国人都能做一些简单的交流了，有一次，一个老外还夸我的发音不错，把我高兴坏了。

滕：你现在和爷爷奶奶住在一起，你和他们的关系如何？

希：呃……他们把我照顾得很好。但是还是和父母的关系不一样，就是……不一样。他们对我很好，但我还是很想念我的爸爸妈妈。

滕：你的爷爷奶奶会监督你学习吗？

希：不会，他们会关心我有没有饿着，渴不渴，冷不冷……但是不会关心我的英语，因为他们一点儿也不懂英语。

滕：你认为这影响你的英语学习吗？

希：有一些吧！我现在在学习上遇到一些困难的时候，就只能向老师或者朋友们求助，可是当我在家的時候，就很不方便。我现在在家学习英语的时间就比以前少了。

01. T- You have mentioned that you had a good relationship with your parents.

02. C- Very good. My parents treated me like a friend.

03. They always played games with me. And I loved to share everything with them.

04. T- Did you talk in English with your parents?

05. C- Frequently. My parents' English is OK, but their oral English is poor,

06. so sometimes my father asked me to correct his pronunciation.

07. Ha ha....(laughs) . It's amazing, right?

08. And they supervised my studies, my mother liked to check my homework.

09. My parents always encouraged me to practice more.

10. Whenever we met a foreigner, they would encourage me to talk with the

foreigner.

11. And I found that I could hold simple communication with foreigners.
12. One time, a foreigner told me my pronunciation was very good.
13. It is amazing, right?
14. T- Since you live with your grandparents now, what's the relationship with your grandparents?
15. C- Er...they take good care of me.
16. But it is different to the relationship with my parents.
17. It is just...different. They treat me well, but I still miss my parents.
18. T- Do your grandparents supervise your English learning?
19. C- No. They care about whether I am hungry, whether I am thirsty, whether I am cold...
20. but they can't discuss my English learning with me.
21. They don't know English at all.
22. T- Do you think this influences your English learning?
23. C- Yes, a little.
24. When I have difficulty in English, I only can turn to my teachers or my friends.
25. But when I am at home, it is not convenient to look for help from them.
26. So I spend less time on English than before.

Also, because of the examination-driven educational system, the main consideration in China is to classify the level of students as part of their rapid transition through the system. Cherry complained that the school only focused on their examination scores, which made her stressful.

Extract 36 LOC_C_20151009

滕：你的高中生活怎么样？

希：好紧张，压力山大。我们每两周只能休息一天！他们一定是疯了！我们才

高一啊！

滕：（高中生活紧张）应该是正常的。

希：我知道，但我觉得好累。你也知道，学校只注重学生在考试中的分数。所以老师就一直要求我们学习学习再学习。似乎学生只是学习的机器而已！你知道吗？我们从来没有任何课外活动。在早餐前，我们得上两节早自习，读语文或者英语。老师总是要求我们大声读，但是每天早上我都觉得饿惨了，哪有力气读嘛。早餐后，上午有五节五节课等着我们。天哪！午饭后，我们只有一个小时的休息时间。下午，又是五节课！这远远没有结束。晚饭后，我们还有三个晚自习。每个老师都给我们布置了好多家庭作业。如果我们能完不成，就要受罚。但时间这么少，怎么可能完成所有的作业嘛。难怪说，高中时代是人生最痛苦的时刻。天哪，哪个来救我一下啊！

01. T- How was your senior high school life?

02. C- So nervous and stressful. We could only have one-day rest every two weeks!

03. They must be crazy! We were only in Grade one!

04. T- It seems normal.

05. C- I know but I am still tired.

06. As you know, the school only focuses on the students' marks in the examination.

07. So the teacher keeps asking us to study and study.

08. It seems the students are only study machines!

09. You know what? We never have any extra-curricular activities.

10. In the morning, before breakfast, we have two classes to read English or Chinese.

11. My teacher always asked us to read aloud but every morning I felt so hungry that I don't have energy to read.

12. After breakfast, there are as many as five classes waiting for us. Oh, my god!

13. After lunch, we only have one hour to rest.
14. In the afternoon, there are five classes again! It is not the end.
15. After supper, we still have three classes to review.
16. Every teacher gives us mountainous homework to do.
17. If we cannot complete the homework, we will be punished.
18. But the time is so limited. It is impossible to finish all the homework.
19. It is no wonder it is said that the time in senior high school is the most painful time in one's life. Oh, god, who can save me?

Through these extracts it is possible to trace changes in Cherry's learner identity. At times she felt quite overwhelmed by the pressure of exams (related to the systemic patterns of control) and other times she felt quite motivated –as indicated in her intersubjective positioning of a 'good student' and class delegate. Furthermore, the reduction in resources at home, once she had moved in with her grandparents, meant she had to find other resources, thus she reached out to her English teacher, even sharing her diaries with her. And as class delegate she felt pressure to perform better in her English learning. In other words, her language practices changed as her circumstances did so – and likewise her constantly shifting identity meant increased investment in the classroom practice and community members.

8.6 Comment

As the only participant from the upper class, Cherry possesses more social capital than the others. Her parents are both government officers and have good educational backgrounds, which makes them pay much attention to Cherry's development, including her English language learning. They set an obvious plan for Cherry: going abroad and managed to instill similar values in Cherry. This has resulted in her perceiving English as a valuable form of cultural capital. Aligning herself to this ideology, she intends to go abroad in the future and she perceives English as potentially affording her with the opportunity to do so, as well as providing her great

help both in her studies and daily life.

Another social capital which benefits her is her uncle who has settled in America. Through her uncle, Cherry is able to move from an imagined picture of the United States of America to a more specific image (from exposure to customs of a foreign country where English is spoken to a specific desire to become part of an American university community).

Considering that Bourdieu's (1992) definition of social capital is the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that are accrued by an individual or a group (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), it can be argued that Cherry starts out with a higher social capital than the other participants in the study. In fact, Cherry is not really from a rural region. She spent her childhood in the capital city. Her English learning experience is more comparable to students from urban cities than to those of students from rural regions. She only stayed at the rural secondary school for a short time. Once returning to an urban school, a close relationship with learning English and current and future access to certain forms of cultural, economic and social capital would be expected.

Cherry established a certain relationship with other girls through English acquisition. These girls formed a circle of 'pop girls' and there was one condition to be a member of this circle that one's English grade must be good enough. They often discussed issues about English learning and helped each other to improve their English learning. It seemed to be a target language community for these girls' English learning. The identity as a member of this community further promotes their investment in English. Cherry has invested in English since she was very young and it is very possible that she will continue making an investment in English for a long time in the future. Although her identity has changed with time and space, she is still highly motivated and her investment in English does not change because of her prior social capital.

The chart below shows a graphic summary of Cherry’s perceived benefits, her intersubjective positionings and the systemic patterns of control which all contribute to her changing identities and investment in English. During her school years, Cherry is ‘situated’ in a specific niche that empowers her as a language learner. According to Berglund (2009, p. 187), “the learner is seen as situated in a specific culture and where learning takes place through interaction with the environment, including artefacts and other human beings”. In Cherry’s case, there are clear affordances or perceived benefits, especially as her position in the language learning ‘community’ is reinforced as she gains position as a class delegate with high scores.

Table 6. Summary of Cherry’s affordances, positions, patterns of control and tensions

| Participant | Affordances/Perceived benefits | Intersubjective positionings | Systemic patterns of control | Tensions |
|---|---|--|--|--|
| Cherry (as student in Chengdu) | Introduced to English in 3 rd grade; seen as important asset by her parents | Average grades although hard-working | Province with better education levels; began learning English early; living in province capital. | Are not standing out; parents told friends her English was ‘so-so’ |
| Cherry (as student in Bright Secondary School) | (undefined) resource for future | Studious, dedicated learner (highest test scores, class delegate); more confident in academic abilities due to early access to English lessons (although less out-going around her grandparents) | Easier university entrance exam due to her <i>hukou</i> ; | Not living with parents; living with grandparents; parents assess her English as ‘OK’ (high praise by Chinese standards) |
| Cherry (as daughter) | Parental support & supervision in language learning; motivated through her uncle in America | Out-going; close to parents | Family member of ‘privileged’ civil servants; private English lessons in run by university in Shanghai | |
| Cherry (as student in ‘foreign’ school) | Possibility of studying in American university; sharing secrets from parents (using English); travelling abroad | Friend of ‘popular girls’ | Student at foreign senior high school | Living with grandparents, less language support; not as close to them as with her |

Chapter 9. Other related results

Most of the Chinese students, especially senior high school students, are asked to spend approximately fourteen hours on study and they suffer from great stress because of the competitive *gaokao*. In order to get high scores in examinations, both schools and students make full use of every minute. Based on the data from the focus group discussion, all the six participants shared the same opinion (line 09-12, Extract 3 below). The participants in the focus group are clearly aware of the systemic pattern of control that is part of the Chinese education –in particular the examinations and the way in which the teachers seem to only support the students they see as potentially able to gain high score results.

Extract 37 FGD_20131216_CEL

毅： ... 此外，我讨厌我的英语老师。

滕：为什么？

毅：她总是强迫我们做好多作业。如果我们没有完成，那我们就死定了。

武：她好偏心的。她只喜欢能在考试中考高分的学生。即使那些学生做了错事，她也不罚他们。但是当“坏”学生做错了的话，哦喏（一种叹息），你-就-死-定-了！

霆：开什么玩笑。不只是你的英语老师，所有的老师都只喜欢“好”的学生。你还是太天真了，小伙子！

其他人：哈哈（笑）。那确实。你说对了。

01. E- What's more, I hated my English teacher.

02. T- Why?

03. E- She always forced us to do so much homework. If we didn't finish, we were done.

04. W- She is partial.

05. She only likes the students who can get high scores in examinations.
06. Even if those students did something wrong, she would not punish them.
07. But when ‘bad’ students did something wrong,
08. aoho (a kind of sigh), y-o-u w-i-l-l b-e d-i-e.
09. D- Are you kidding me?
10. All teachers only love ‘good’ students, not only your English teacher.
11. You are so naïve, young man!
12. Others- Ha ha (laughs). That is true. You are right.

Besides schools, the public mainly focus on the students’ scores in examinations rather than their personal development (line 01-05, Extract 39 below). The parents also hold this opinion that only the students who get high scores in examination could be considered as a ‘good student’ (line 02-04, Extract 39 below). This notion seems to be a generally held belief for most people in China. The only indicator for a ‘good’ student is getting high scores in examinations. Or in the words of Darvin and Norton (2015), the majority of Chinese appear to accommodate to the “dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion, and the privileging and marginalization of ideas, people, and relations” (p. 44).

Extract 38 LOC_C_20130606

希： 我不知道为什么大人总是喜欢问孩子的学习情况。每次我的亲戚见到我，他们总是问我：“最近学习怎么样啊”，“你最近考试中得了多少分啊？”“这次期末考试你考了第几名啊？”一直问个不停，烦都烦死了！

- 01 . C- I don’t know why the grownups always like to ask about children’s study situation.
- 02 . Every time my relatives meet me, they ask questions like

- 03 . “What is the situation of your study recently?”,
- 04 . “What scores did you get in the latest examination?”
- 05 . and “what's your rank of the final exam?”
- 06 . Always! I am always bored to death.

Extract 39 FGD_20131216_CEL

武：不仅是老师，几乎所有的大人都喜欢“好”的学生。每一次，确实，是每一次，我的亲戚遇到我，他们总会问我的分数和我考试名次。如果考好了，他们会夸我，比如说“你真是个好孩子”和“真棒”。但是一旦他们发现我的分数不如他们预期的高，他们会一直说“要用功哈”“不要偷懒哈”。他们知道啥子嘛？他们啥子都不晓得！我根本就不懒。考试结果可能受许多因素的影响的嘛！他们怎么知道这是因为我偷懒？事实上，我都快累死了！

其他 - 是...（全部同意）

丽：我也是。现在我甚至多怕放假的。我总是得找借口离他们远点儿。

希：（他们就是）这么烦人。

- 01. W- Not only teachers, almost all adults like ‘good’ students.
- 02. Every time, yes, every time, when I met my relatives, they would ask my scores and my positions in the rank list.
- 03. If my scores are high, they would praise me.
- 04. Such as “ What a good boy you are” and “ Amazing”.
- 05. But once they found my scores were not high as they expected, they would keep saying “Work hard. Don’t be lazy.”
- 06. They know what? They know nothing!
- 07. I am not lazy at all.
- 08. The results of examination can be influenced by many factors.

09. How could they know it was because of my laziness?
10. In fact, I am tired to death!
11. Others- Yes...(all totally agree)
12. L- Me, too. Now I am even afraid of holidays.
13. I always found some excuses to keep them away.
14. C- (They are) so annoying.

Furthermore, many classes are teacher-centered, that is, the teacher is the main focus of information and content in the class and the teacher devotes most of the time to explaining this knowledge to the students. This approach is very much focused on mechanical memorization of language structures, vocabulary etc. in a largely decontextualized manner. As a result, students are principally expected only to listen and they seldom have opportunities to make their own voice heard (Cheng, 2011). Thus, most English teaching classes in China follow a traditional method of instructional teaching in language classroom with little exposure to the language outside class and in a more ‘natural’ context. Chinese students do not have many opportunities to practice and interact with the target language due to the limited class time (Cheng, 2011) and because the English education process focuses mostly on linguistic details and accuracy, guided by textbooks instead of on language interaction (Cheng, 2011; Wang & Yi, 2005). This method reduces the interests of English learning and sometimes they complained that the boring explanation of linguistic knowledge sounded like “lullaby” (line 07-10, Extract 40 below).

Extract 40 FGD_20131216_CEL

滕：你对目前的英语课有什么看法？

毅：无聊死了。

武：读单词，背诵课文和学习语法。一直一直。

思：我们都经历了这样的时期。哈哈...（笑）

希：在大学里会好一些吗？

丽：会，但也只好一点点。

武：当我听她（他现在的英语老师）讲解课文、词汇和语法的时候，我总是想睡觉。

希：听起来跟摇篮曲一样。

其他人：哈哈（笑）

霆：我也这么办过（上课睡觉）。

希：有一次，我问英语老师能不能在课堂做一些游戏或上组织一些活动。她拒绝了。

滕：为什么？

希：她说时间有限。没有时间在课堂上做游戏。首先得完成她的教学任务。最后，她还补充说：“考试中可没有游戏。”

其他人：啊...（叹息）考试，又来了。

01. T- What are your opinions of current English teaching?

02. E- Boring to death.

03. W- Reading vocabulary, reciting texts and learning grammar. Again and again.

04. S- We all suffered through such periods. Ha ha...(laughs)

05. C- Was it much better in college?

06. L- It was, but only a bit.

07. W- When I listened to her (his current English teacher) explanations of texts, vocabulary and grammar, I would always want to fall asleep.

08. C- It sounds like lullaby.

09. Others- Ha ha (laughs)

Moreover, teachers mostly focus on reading and writing in class because they are

held accountable for ensuring that their students achieve high scores in state exams, most of which focus on written answers as the main method that for demonstrating reading comprehension rather than oral expression (Lo Bianco, 2009). There is also little emphasis on listening comprehension. For instance, the full mark for most of the English examinations is 150 points of which 125 are about reading and writing, while the listening part only covers 25 points. At the same time, English examinations also include an oral component. The direct consequence of this kind of education system is that most Chinese students' English is known as "deaf and dumb" English, meaning they can read and write English, some of them even are really good at reading and writing while their listening and speaking skills are poor, in particular students from rural China.

Chapter 10. Conclusions

As I mentioned in chapter 4, there were a total of ten participants in the study, of whom four cases were selected to be analyzed in detail in to answer these research questions:

To what extent is English perceived as a valuable form of cultural capital by a group of students at a secondary school in rural China and by former students who have gone to college?

(How) do young people at a school in rural China construct their relationships with learning the English language in relation to their perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital?

How can the social capital that these students possess now help to explain their motivation and/or investment in English learning?

How do their changing identities across time and space affect their motivation/investment in English learning?

The key notions of this study are English learning, cultural (including linguistic) and social capital, English learners' identity and investment. I would like to summarize the connection among them as this: investment is linked to assumed/tangible possible return on investment (capital), which is in turn related to learner subjectivity/identity - how the learner sees herself in relation to this investment in the community of English speakers.

10.1 Summary of findings

Based on the data I have collected, from the beginning all of the participants established specific and individualized relationships with English learning in relation to their perceived current and future access to cultural, economic as well as social capital. For instance, Lily identified strongly with the 'imaginary' target group; she

was a dedicated learner who soon became the class leader. Serena also envisioned English as a means to future jobs (vague), accepting the ‘commodification’ of the language as potential capital. Cherry and Ding’s intersubjective positionings towards English as potential capital were somewhat more complex, especially in Ding’s case. In the beginning, the systemic patterns of control played a key role for Cherry; her parents and grandparents felt that English was a key aspect for her future, going so far as to transfer her to a different province so that Cherry’s identity was more that of ‘obedient learner’ than the self-initiated enthusiasm of Lily or Serena. And Ding’s intersubjective positioning at first was quite negative –Ding had little interest or investment for English; he was far more invested in mathematics and hard sciences as these subjects, different from English, were perceived as more beneficial for his professional interests when he was in secondary school.

Additionally the participants’ intersubjective positionings in regards to English changed across time and space to differing degrees. Lily still believes that investing in English has potential benefits; in particular it could be an affordance in preparing for the state exam to become a public school teacher as she currently feels overworked in her job as a teacher in a private institution. Serena’s intersubjective positioning towards the language in question peaked at the time she was employed in a hospital in a large urban area in which she was a reference for the hospital administration, serving as ‘language broker’ for foreign patients. Her positioning shifts once Serena moves to a rural area and begins to work in a hospital where there is no need for English with the patients. She no longer feels the need for investment in the language, at least not to the extent that she initially demonstrated. Cherry’s intersubjective positioning has shifted from ‘being an obedient daughter and grand-daughter’ to a more self-initiated investment in the language as she sees potential benefits shaped through studying abroad at US university (influenced by her uncle who lives in this country). Of all the participants, it is perhaps Ding who has the most dramatic shift in positioning towards the English language, mediated through a realization that his lack

of previous investment may have cost him his dream job (airline pilot). He is now working as an airplane mechanic with apparently little possibilities for career promotion. His intersubjective positioning holds the most tension – he does not particularly like the language (he saw no cause for investment in it in secondary school) and at most it served him as a ‘protection’ against other classmates’ taunts of his lower economic status (he was at school with financial aide), as was demonstrated earlier in the data analysis (the extract below was also reproduced in Ding’s original analysis).

Extract 20 (LOC_D_20130816)

霆：从我很小的时候，我就发誓要好好学习，上一个好的大学，这样的话，我毕业之后就能找到个工作来赚钱养活我的家人。对我来说，既没有有权势的亲朋好友，也没有钱。所以，这是我唯一的出路了。总有一天，我要让那些看不起我的人羡慕我并且为曾经嘲笑我而后悔。我一定会的！相信我！

01. D- When I was very young, I swore to study hard and go to a good university.

02. When I graduate, I could find a good job to earn money to take care of my family.

03. For me, I don’t have powerful relatives or friends to help us and we lack money. 04. This is the only way and I have no choice.

05. One day I will make the people who always laughed at me envy me

06. and regret looking down upon me!

07. I will!

08. Believe me!

(Ding, interview)

He also shifts from being a motivated individual who can use learning for upward mobility and to being a frustrated individual with an uncertain future and yet he is still

willing to invest in English learning if he finds the time and resources to do so.

So it can be seen that the participants from the college group do not have the same investment and intersubjective positioning towards English, as regards whether it serves as cultural capital in their life after they graduated from college.

With reference to EFL theory –which often only considers learners’ motivation for learning within the classroom setting and as a static, constant factor- it is clear from these data that this phenomenon cannot be understood apart from the participants’ social relations in the real world. Indeed, if we consider what O’Regan argues concerning the use of English(es), we can conclude that the ‘lifeworlds’ of the speakers are directly related to their dynamic, constantly changing identities related to the language and the uses they may have of it.

That these are lingua franca Englishes is key, because speakers of different L1s from different parts of the world carry their lexico-grammars and their lifeworlds with them when they are speaking other languages. That is, if they wish to speak at all, they intend to mean something and to receive meaning in return, and are willing to commit to the struggle to make meaning, regardless of how messy this process may be. These speakers speak and will often write in a form of English which is marked to a greater or lesser extent by their local L1 knowledge and experience (...). (O’Regan, 2016, p. 211)

At the same time, the participants are aware that their ‘form of English’ will be compared and valued according to social and administrative norms; standards often set to meet assumed native speaker comparisons.

A central theme of this research is that in a job market which values English as a key skill and communicative resource, individuals must have what is considered a

“good” command of English in order to be considered worthy of employment and, indeed, legitimised as successful citizens. From an LPP [Language Policy and Planning] perspective, this is an example of language ideologies around ideal (neoliberal) citizenship, along with management actions taken in the educational sector and in private corporations (where hiring practices are embedded in and shaped by dominant ideologies), that intersect with language practices in a range of contexts. (Block, *ibid* 2017, n/p))

For the participants in the study, the changes in attitude concerning the possibilities of converting English to cultural capital must be understood within the scope of their social capital, along with the shift of their identities across time and space (e.g. Cherry’s move from one city to another, Selena and Ding’s job changes) as well as within the systemic patterns of control (e.g. ‘Chinese capitalism’). These changes must also be seen next to the affordances using the target language provides them within the context of their own lives (e.g. Selena could be a language broker in the hospital in an urban location but not in the rural hospital).

Learning English as a Foreign Language is often understood as a means of upward mobility for the middle class, however, as this study shows, the actual users of English(es) are often “the poor, the disenfranchized, the ethnically marginalized, and the exploited – the ‘McWorkers’ of neoliberal economies” (O’Regan, 2016, pp. 211-212). Ding’s assertion that gaining a good command of English could be a means of protection from the shame he felt coming from a lower, working class family exemplifies this to a degree (the classmates who made him feel ashamed will no longer look down on him). Moreover, for Ding, English is positioned as an elusive pass or ticket into a different socioeconomic and social class which at first means investing in the language learning process to become a pilot and when that is unattainable, his current investment is to become the chief mechanic. “It is a long and tough path. But once I am successful, all my problems, for instant, my parents, my

brother and everything related to money, will be solved.” (至少得十年多吧，好难的。但是，一旦成功了，我所有的问题，比如说我父母啊，我弟啊，还有所有与钱有关的事情就都可以解决了。)。 (Extract 23; discussed previously in Ding’s story).

Thus, this study shows how the investment in the English language learning process of the participants is linked to presumed or tangible possible returns on the investment (capital). This is in turn related to their learner subjectivity/identity and how he or she sees him/herself in relation to this investment in the community of English speakers.

However, it must be noted that the community of English speakers also varies for each participant: for Lily it is largely an academic English speaking community associated with the use of English in public schools. For Serena, the English-spoken community was first linked to the medical community (exchanges between her as a nurse and foreign patients in the urban hospital) and later Serena invested (apparently to a lower degree of interest) in a different community – a local business community where she served as a voluntary translator for friends of her parents. Ding’s investment involved at least two ‘imaginary communities’: the imagined international community of English speakers in the world of an airline pilot, replaced by the imagined community of English speaking (and more importantly reading) chief mechanic capable of understanding the specifications on imported pieces for airplanes.

This notion of “imagined community”, first coined by Anderson (1991) and then further theorized by Wenger (1998) has been applied by Norton (2001) in relation to language learners’ English learning experience. She stated that when learners “entered their language classrooms, they not only saw a classroom with four walls, but envisioned a community that transcended time and space. Thus although these learners were engaged in classroom practices, the realm of their community extended to the imagined world outside the classroom –their imagined community” (p.164).

Similar to Lily, Cherry's investment is towards an academic community of English speakers: at first the rather 'vague' (and fictional) community of course book English created by language teaching materials (cf. Gray, 2010; Block, Gray & Holborow, 2012; Block & Gray, 2015). This community then evolves into a more specific imagined community of university student abroad, influenced by her uncle who lives in the USA.

In the next section, I will look at the external and internal factors that have had an impact on the subjects' positioning in relation to the language learning process.

10.2 External factors

Language learning should not only be considered in view of the learners' individual activities which are stimulated by their personal motivations but also as part of social activities which are influenced by their complex and historical learning context. Their learning environment (sometimes known as learning ecology) also holds an important role in the language learning process.

[T]here is a growing recognition that language learning takes place both in and outside of the formal language classroom, especially in regards to the use of social media (...). Barron (2006, p. 195) refers to "learning ecology" to help conceptualize learning as bridged across the spaces of home, school, work, and community. According to Barron, the learning ecology is contextualized -but not limited to a singular context. What takes place in the learning ecology is shaped by both the context(s) and the learners' individual interests and opportunities in formal and informal settings so that "what is learned outside of school can shape what is learned in school" (Greenhow & Rebelia, 2009, p. 122), and vice-versa. (Dooly, *tbp*, 2017)

Some of the key external factors are family' social and economic class, geographic location, perceived potential affordances of the targeted learning investment, social

networks, education system, all of which can be directly or indirectly impact on social, cultural and economic capital.

10.2.1 Social capital

The first external reason, and one which has been discussed extensively throughout this thesis, is the participants' social capital. In a large part, due to the age of the participants in the study, this is determined by their parents' social capital. Another determinant is their geographic location and the perceived benefits that English can have in their immediate context. "[L]earners invest in particular practices not only because they desire specific material or symbolic benefits, but also because they recognize that the capital they possess can serve as affordances to their learning" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 46). But as we see in this data, this can be extended to include potential affordances to work life as well. It has been found that the participants experienced changes –in some cases profound changes- in their attitudes towards English after they graduated from college.

The participants who realized English could not offer any substantial help for their work share one common factor: they had all settled in a small city/ town in or near their original hometowns. This implied that there are few foreign companies and foreigners so they seldom have opportunities to use English in their work places. Bourdieu uses social capital to explain the cold realities of social inequality. Here, social capital reflects the very worst side of the saying, 'It's not what you know, it's *who* you know' (Keirl, 2011, p. 592). In other words, as Darvin and Norton (2015) explain, the desire to engage and invest in international communities of English speakers may be seen as a way to increase their social capital, but these perceived benefits may not necessarily become actual 'controvertible value'.

As mentioned above, it appears that the key feature of their social capital is related to their family background. This is illustrated, for instance, by Cherry's story. Her social

capital, linked to her parent's civil service background and her uncle settling in the USA, results in specific advantages for her academic achievement compared with her peers. Her story reinforces Liu's (2012) examination of the factors that motivated middle school students from different social classes to learn English in China. According to the study, investment in English education varied significantly across distinct social classes. Based on the data from the participants, this study corroborates the notion that with growing social inequality in China, English education is increasingly becoming a site for the reproduction of social-class differences (Butler, 2013; Zou & Zhang, 2011).

As it has been discussed in chapter 2, social capital is the sum of the actual as well as potential resources that can be mobilized or used to advantage oneself through membership in social networks or social connections and organizations. For the participants, their parents and their social network occupy the main part of their social capital.

Indeed, the participants' parents' involvement has had significant effects on their lives, ranging across school selection, leisure activities, establishment of values, even having an impact on their choice of jobs and marriage. The interviews indicate that the participants place importance on their parents' active involvement in the English learning process. For instance, Cherry's father paid considerable attention to her development and tried his best to keep her engaged in her English learning, including buying her books and discussing the book with her and watching English movies together. In contrast, Ding's parents were less involved (or at least their participation was not highlighted in the interview). For Ding, his parents –in particular his mother– were seen more as a burden than an affordance and he explicitly discouraged his mother from participating in school activities due to her handicap, thereby avoiding teasing from his classmates. At the same time, these contrasting stories highlight the agency of the learner. Ding, who has more limited economic and social capital and

comes from a poorly resourced learning environment, eventually becomes highly invested (and continues to invest) in the English-spoken community in order to overcome the “systemic patterns of control” (Darvin & Norton, 2015) in the job hiring process in China.

The deployment (or not) by the participants’ parents of their social capital is also indicative of whether they align themselves to the perpetuated ideologies concerning the affordances of learning English in China. Darvin and Norton (2015) argue that “ideologies are dominant ways of thinking that organize and stabilize societies while simultaneously determining modes of inclusion and exclusion, and the privileging and marginalization of ideas, people, and relations” (p. 44). However, as they also point out, and following Blommaert’s (2005) argument, individuals may act according to dominant “hegemonic practices” (...) “without necessarily subscribing to the ideology that informs them” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 44). This underscores a greater recognition of individual agency (as seen in the previous example of Ding).

The study also foregrounds a “relatively neglected problem [that] is how individuals derive social capital from more than one context and the extent to which they benefit from the capital in each” (Dufur, Parcel, & Troutman, 2013, p. 1). As these same authors explain:

There are theoretical reasons to distinguish between the capital created in the family and that created at school. The ties created between parents and children are strong, the result of repeated and frequent interactions; because the parent–child bond is one of the most intimate relationships in early life, we would expect the social capital created in families to exert a heavy influence on child academic outcomes, even into adolescence. (p. 3)

At the same time, these researchers do not dismiss the notion that “social capital

created in disparate contexts may still be interrelated” (p. 6). And while this study cannot deem to provide the in-depth analysis that the aforementioned study undertakes, it does corroborate their arguments “that investments in different social sites may potentially lead to different returns” and “social capital is site-specific” (p. 17). Similar to the findings of Dufur, et al. (2013), this study also demonstrates that investment may be “best considered as being created across multiple contexts” (p. 17), co-created by both school and parents. For instance, extracurricular activities involve investment of both the school (creating, administering and monitoring of activities) and the parents (payment, transport, emotional support to join and continue the activities).

The data in this study show that local factors may affect the parents’ abilities or willingness to invest in English language learning. In some cases the parents lack the interactional strategies to successfully deploy their social and cultural resources (e.g. Serena, Ding) whereas both Lily and Cherry’s families went out of their way to provide resources and opportunities for their daughters to have access to English.

Ding’s resistance to his mother attending the parents meeting because he felt ashamed of her disability resulted in the lack of communication between family and school, and presumably affecting his English learning to a certain extent. In a similar manner, Serena’s parents worked in a factory far away from Bright Secondary School resulting in infrequent contact between Serena and her parents, and it was obvious that the communication between her parents and the school was not very regular.

In contrast, Lily and Cherry’s parents made use of the social capital, including their social network to support their daughters’ learning. The families of these two English learners tried their best to maintain and enhance their daughters’ social positions by converting useful resources into forms of cultural, social as well as economic capital and tangible advantages, including relocation to gain access to better schooling and

better conditions for university entrance exams (Cherry) as well opportunities to speak and learn English due to their status as civil servants (Lily). It can be assumed that this is indirectly related to an acceptance of prevailing ideologies, which has predisposed them to think and act in certain ways (Darvin & Norton, 2015) –in particular the acceptance of the *need for English* for social and economic mobility in China. Or as Block (2017) puts it, “how the English language is a key element in increasingly instrumental conceptions of the ideal citizen in different countries around the world” (p. 43)

As discussed in chapter 2, *guanxi*, whose literal meaning is “connections” or “relationships”, has an actual meaning far beyond this, as sometimes relationships are not necessary to produce *guanxi*. Coming from rural areas, most of the participants’ parents were unlikely to have relatives or acquaintances in powerful or influential positions as “parental networks tend to be homogeneous with respect to class (...). Working class and poor networks do not encompass middle-class parents” (Horvat, Weininger, & Lareau, 2006, p.465). Seven of the ten participants (in the initial research cohort- only four have been analyzed in detail here) asserted that if they could have gone to a better school or class, their English grade would be much better than now. Their assertions may not be that far off the mark. As Block has argued, studies support this:

[...] it is also evident wherever English medium instruction has been integrated into mainstream education, a process engendering situations in which it is children and young adults from middle- and upper-class positions in society who have the most and best quality access to English (Block, 2017, p. 49).

And similar to Dufur et al. (2013), this study’s findings also “suggest the need to study the effects of social capital in other contexts [not just inequality in school settings], particularly when studying inequality among adults” (p. 19). All the college

participants were raised in working-class peasant families. Their parents' cultural, economic and social capital were limited enough to create barriers for the participants' access to university and subsequent job choices. As a consequence, it turns out that English is unable to serve as a valuable form of cultural capital as they had expected: in the end, it does not bring them economic as well as social capital, at least not for all of them.

Still, there are unanticipated affordances that they had not perceived previously and which allow them to engage with English speaking communities such as Ding's possibility of learning about exported mechanical parts (and perhaps eventually leading to participation in larger international communities of airplane mechanics via Internet), or his chance to talk to his 'near-native' English teacher who has studied in Australia, Cherry's use of English with her friends to keep secrets from their parents and eventual acceptance at her school as a 'popular girl', Serena's role as language broker at both an urban hospital and as translator for the factory where her parents' work, and Lily's job as an English teacher in a private school.

10.3 Lens of investment

As we have discussed previously, social capital can have a vital effect on investment in English learning for the participants. It should be highlighted that investment is not equivalent to instrumental motivation. Norton (2000) states

the concept of instrumental motivation presupposes a unitary, fixed, and ahistorical language learner who desires access to material resources that are the privilege of target language speakers. The notion of investment, on the other hand, conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires. The notion presupposes that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they

relate to the social world. (p.10)

Some participants admitted that when they went to college or senior high school, they did not like to speak in the classroom. Whenever they were asked to make a speech or answer questions, they would feel very nervous and could not speak well in spite of the fact they got high scores in the examination, which focused on testing reading and writing skills principally. The participants' feelings corroborate Norton's theory (2000) that anxiety and self-confidence influence the extent to which learners create and respond to opportunities to practice the target language. This notion of linguistic self-confidence has mostly been considered as a determinant of attitude and effort expended towards second language learning, both in a multi-cultured setting with possible interethnic contacts (Clement, 1980; Clement & Kruidenier, 1985) and in a foreign language classroom when the students are exposed to poor learning situations, for instance course difficulty, or negative evaluations by the teacher or by peers (see also Clement, Dörnyei & Noels, 1994; Foss & Reitzel, 1988; Horwitz & Young, 1991).

Still, it is argued that it is equally applicable to this study. The participants' feelings of anxiety and lack of self-confidence are socially constructed by the participants as a very real, lived experience. The anxiety the participants experienced when they attempted to speak English is not an invariant characteristic of their ability but is differently constructed in diverse encounters with target language speakers and must be understood with reference to their investment in particular kinds of social relationships. The participants with little social capital are unable to get as much access to English learning as others, so that being ashamed and inferior in classroom has become to the 'norm' since they were in secondary school, which only became exacerbated once they went to college or senior high school.

After so many years' learning, almost all of the participants who began to search for a

job stopped investing in English learning although they still had strong motivation. As for Serena, her investment in English learning is based on a specific identity negotiation and development. As the only child of her family, her identity determined that she had to return to her hometown to take care of her parents. Once there, she found that there were few opportunities to practice English. The fluidity of her entire language learning process should also be highlighted: from a rural secondary school to a college in an urban city then to one of the most developed cities in China-Shanghai and then to the rural small town again. The complex learning circumstance led to several changes in her investment.

In essence, the participants with less social capital have a strong motivation to learn English because, as a person who is from a rural region, they have a strong desire to change their fate and identity. However, their access to ‘affordances of learning’ (Darvin & Norton, 2015), especially in the oral production and reproduction may be limited. As I demonstrate in Cherry’s story, the language learner with efficient social capital pays more attention to speaking and listening competences than others. The predominant ideology that their social capital will ensure them a bright future where they have more probabilities of settling down in more developed cities or going to abroad motivated them at the beginning of the schooling experiences. This demonstrates how the learners’ specific needs, desires, and negotiations of these features should be regarded as constituting the very fabric of students’ lives and as determining their investment in learning the target language (McKay & Wong, 1996).

All of the participants’ perspective about English as a form of cultural capital as well as their investment in English learning must be understood with their identities which are complex, ahistorical and sometimes contradictory. Although most of participants were highly invested in learning English, despite some of them feeling ambivalent to speaking or practicing it in class or to engage with target language speakers, indicates their feeling of being marginalized and reinforces their identities from rural regions.

10.4 Lens of identity

Aspects of identity generally change across time and space, and the identities of all participants have undergone and continue to undergo significant changes from when they graduated from college and began to work in society, when their idealized views of their English-speaking bilingual selves in the future had extended beyond the four walls of the classroom.

As a language learner in secondary school, Lily's intersubjective positioning is one of dedicated learner. She seems to have enjoyed her English classes but at the same time recognizes that her dedication to the language learning process was, in a large part, due to parental pressure to get good grades. So this positioning is overlapped with another identity of 'obedient daughter' who wants to do her parents proud by passing with high qualifications and finding a good job. She is aware that her parents' position in society affords her good learning resources but at the same time it is the parents' social network that ensures that she is aware of the dominant ideology of 'English as a passport'. Her possession of higher economic, cultural, and social capital than her peers affords her the opportunity to position herself as a "legitimate participant and contributor" to the academic community she will eventually join (from dedicated language student to language teacher).

Early in her career as a language learner, Serena identifies herself as a 'bookworm'. She is deeply invested in the learning process and dedicates considerable spare time outside of class to learning English. Her intersubjective positioning to her family, like Lily, is as an obedient daughter. She concedes to becoming a nurse, as well as later leaving a job she enjoyed in an urban hospital to move back to the rural town where she was originally from in order to take care of her parents. Her identity as an English speaker is closely related to being a 'language broker' (in the urban hospital and later as a translator in her parents' factory). This last role, in turn, provides a 'boost' to her parents' social capital and further settles her into her latest identity of parent caretaker

(with little use to engage with English).

In his early years as a learner, Ding's identity is not aligned with the predominant ideology of English as a requirement for social mobility. His imagined community is linked with maths and hard sciences members, not language speakers. While at school, Ding positions himself as inadequate in language learning and also positions himself as an 'outsider' (financial aide recipient, lower economic family and crippled mother), who is in turn identified by others as an easy target for teasing (his classmates made fun of his crippled mother's way of walking). He later identifies himself as a diligent learner once at university and this engagement helps him shift his identity to a much more outgoing and successful learner who enjoys his classes, including conversations, with his English teacher. Finally, Ding's professional identity becomes one of an over-qualified worker for the job he now holds but who has aspirations to be promoted to a better job (although not the 'dream' job of pilot to which he had once aspired). To attain this promotion, investment in a specific language community would be necessary –a community of literate readers of English manuals).

Cherry began her studies of English in third grade. Her identity as a language learner was 'so-so' –an identity co-constructed with her parents and her teachers because all her classmates had similar social capital as her so she had nothing prior in English learning. Once her parents had made the initiative of sending her to live with her grandparents in a rural secondary school where she had a better foundation of English learning than her classmates. Once there, Cherry's identity shifted to a studious, dedicated, confident learner (she began to achieve the highest test scores, became the class delegate). This identity was supported by the fact that she had to early access to English lessons compared with her classmates. She also aligned herself more completely with an imagined community of English speakers, in particular the United States. Her latest identity of 'elite student' in a school for foreigners allows her to envision herself as a potential member of the imagined community of 'students

abroad’.

10.5. Other related findings

Another external factor that affects the convertibility of English into cultural capital is the current English education system in China. Firstly, the prevalent approach to teaching language content in most English courses places an emphasis on the learning of grammar (lexicon, syntax, morphology) rather than the ability to use the target language (Ren & Yu, 2013). There has been ample research in foreign language teaching methods that demonstrate a teaching approach can have either beneficial or adverse effects on learner investment. For instance, Kumaravadivelu (2001; 2002; 2003) brings out the need for teachers to fully understand how their students’ life experiences, goals, and learning and communication styles may have an impact on the amount of investment a learner is willing to give. Thus, a ‘non’ communicative approach to language learning may have a negative effect on a student (e.g. disengagement, boredom) or it may have a positive effect in the case that it fits the learner’s style, as was the case of Serena, who defined herself as a ‘bookworm’ or Lily, who excelled as a language learner. At the same time, a communicative approach may have an adverse effect on a learner who is more introverted and unwilling to speak in front of others (e.g. Ding).

Secondly, because of the examination-driven educational system, the main consideration in China is to classify the level of students as part of their rapid transition through the system. For instance, as was seen in the previous chapter, Cherry complained that the school only focused on their examination scores, which made her stressful.

This was the case for the participants of the study. The systemic patterns of control have determined their access to learning resources, or “affordances of learning” in the words of Darvin and Norton (2015). This includes the allocation of budgets to local

schools for buying teaching materials and for high-quality teachers as well as access to extracurricular learning activities such as private tutors or technology resources. When they first encountered English learning at college almost all of the participants encountered difficulties because of their non-standard pronunciation, their listening ability was not as sharp as expected or their oral English was not as fluent as their peers from urban cities. Lily even mentioned that when she first went to college, there was a big gap between her and her classmates who were from urban areas, especially in her listening and speaking skills. When she first communicated with English native speakers, she felt she had little fluency, except some simple and short sentences. This often led the participants to position themselves as 'less knowledgeable' in comparison with others, in particular in relation to various indicators of English proficiency and made them lose their confidence in their language competences, based on their lower scores in the state examinations.

It appears that education is increasingly becoming a means of reproducing social class as well as promoting the mobility between different social classes in China, even if it still may not be perceived as such. As English examinations have become a powerful mechanism of social stratification, overturning the egalitarianism in the pre-reform era (Xu, 2004), English learning provides tangible opportunities for upwards social mobility, or at least that is the predominant ideology and one which the participants and their more immediate relatives position themselves towards. (In reality, language skills are not a guarantee of job security, as exemplified in the cases of Serena and Ding).

It appears that in the end, the imagined community (Norton, 2015) is unattainable for the participants. As it has been explained previously, while investing time, money and energy in English learning, the language learners also make investment in the intangible communities of practice, which they imagine they are becoming a part of. As Norton (2000, 2006) claims, although not yet real, these private visions may

provide a strong impetus for language learning. For many language learners, the target language community is not only a reconstruction of past communities and historically constituted relationships among members, but also a community of the imagination, a desired community which can offer possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future. An imagined community assumes an imagined identity, and the language learners' hopes for the future are integral to these identities, so all of learner's investments in the target language should be understood within this context. If the language learners project themselves in their imagined communities, it again enhances their confidence and their English learning.

It is important to note that positioning towards the imagined communities of language speakers is not fixed and static.

While the concepts of 'positioning' or 'subject position' are metonymic of the imposition of power, they can also allow learners to regard themselves as 'choosing subjects' (Davies & Harré, 1990), who can rethink this 'place' that has been filled and internalized. (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 46)

For example, when Serena returned to her hometown, she finally stopped investing in English after approximately ten years' dedicated to the learning process. The main reason for this shift was because the desired community where she could imagine herself involved in English had disappeared. In comparison, Lily, who is the only participant who continued investing in English after she graduated from college, has a community where she can practice English and re-construct her identities through communication with other members of this community.

For several of the participants, there is no target language community, which may have led them to have ambivalent feelings about speaking or practicing English. For most of the participants, during their time at school they were unable to create their

own imagined communities, perhaps in a large part due to the teaching approach promoted in the schools. However, for some of the participants the opportunity to shift from imagined

10.6 Pedagogical implications

The study indicates it is important to understand what opportunities are available to foster the learner to invest in English as Foreign Language and how these opportunities are socially structured. Educators need to understand how English learners respond to the opportunities to invest in EFL. Both the English teacher and other educators need to develop an understanding of learners' investments in English and how it is influenced by their social capital and their changing identities. Not only in this study, in fact, a great number of studies show that English learners stop investing in English learning when they find it is not 'useful' in reality, even after many years dedicated to learning it. In this particular study, this factor provoked negative reactions among the English learners, their parents and the English teachers. For the participants in this study, the main reason that English is not 'useful' is they lack possible contact with the target language community, because they are from rural regions where there is little or no need for its use nor resources for maintaining it through practice.

So what measures can be taken in rural provinces in China to counteract these negative effects? I suggest here that it is best to take actions from two levels: attitude and institution. For the aspect of attitudes, both parents and teachers need to change their views. Many Chinese parents hold a traditional opinion that the main purpose of having children is to be later looked after by their children in old age. That is the underlying reason why Serena's parents asked her to return to her hometown even though they knew that there were few opportunities for Serena in this small town. This is not an isolated case. A change in perspective on behalf of parents in general is necessary to not repeat this kind of tragedy for future generations.

For English teachers, there is a need to change the idea from only paying attention to students' exam scores to focusing on students' overall language development. They need to improve their teaching methods, employing student-centered approaches rather than teacher-centered ones, and pay attention to all the skills of language learning, including listening, speaking, reading, writing as well as sociopragmatic awareness (ability to interact competently in different situations).

On the institutional level, the government needs to take some effective measures. First, there needs to be a substantial improvement in the retirement system for senior citizens in rural regions. Only by eliminating the burden of these members of society will the youth in rural areas be able to develop themselves freely. Secondly, the government bears the duty to improve the current educational system and to continue promoting quality education and make it available to the wider public. As for English education, the practical usage of English needs more attention. Third, the government should promote the development of rural regions to reduce the imbalance and disproportion between urban and rural areas. Plenty of job opportunities should be offered to parents so that there would be no children like Serena who will be left behind. On the other hand, more opportunities in urban cities should be offered to the children whose parents work in cities.

10.7 Final words

At the beginning of the study, the following four driving research questions of this study were posed. This study has endeavoured to answer this as much as possible. I now briefly consider each question.

To what extent is English perceived as a valuable form of cultural capital by a group of students at a secondary school in rural China and by the former students who have gone to college?

As we have seen in the study, on the whole, the participants invest in a language, “with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital and social power” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37). However, we have also seen that the perceptions of the value of this investment shifts over time. For some of them, English is still seen as a commodity that can bring them social mobility and economic gains whereas others no longer feel the need to sustain their investment in English learning. We have seen that their perceptions and subsequent investments are related to the perceived affordances of the target language in their past and current ‘niches’ (e.g. previous schooling, current workplaces).

(How) do young people at a school in rural China construct their relationships with learning the English language in relation to their perceived current and future access to certain forms of social, cultural and economic capital?

This has been partially answered in the previous question, however, once more it is worth noting the flux of their intersubjective positionings. These are not constant and are intimately tied to their current situations and contexts (again, clearly the interaction between the perceived affordances and the participants ‘ecology’, in terms of the community of English language users must be underscored).

How can the social capital that these students possess now help to explain their motivation and/or investment in English learning?

As this study shows, investment is not a simple engagement of the learner, based on individual decision. It is influenced by a multitude of factors (family factors, classroom practices, learning ecology, individual interests, resources, etc.). Given that “identity is fluid, multiple, and a site of struggle, how learners are able to invest in a target language is contingent on the dynamic negotiation of power in different fields,

and thus investment is complex, contradictory, and in a state of flux” (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 37). This statement is sustained by the results of this study. The study reveals that the local factors may affect the parents’ abilities or willingness to invest the social capital of English language learning, for instance some of the parents lacked the interactional strategies to successfully deploy their social and cultural resources. The social capital of each participant was very unique and different from the other and the family interaction with the learning process varied considerably –from rather extreme sacrifices of sending their children to live in other provinces to study to very little interaction with the school at all. Yet for all the participants, social capital (or lack of it) was a key feature for their investment in English language learning, in particular at the beginning of their studies when parental influence might be considered to be at its highest.

How do their changing identities across time and space affect their motivation/ investment in English learning?

This last question has been particularly relevant for the study. As it has been shown, the participants’ intersubjective positionings in regards to English changed across time and space, but to differing degrees. Their investment is dependent on whether they feel it will have potential benefits. In particular, their investment appears to be in relation to the affordance it might bring them professionally.

Theorizing the concept of subjectivity as the multiple and dynamic ways in which we ‘come into being’ across space and time (Patel, 2016); ways which are shaped and are shaping both individual and social histories has helped shed light on how these individuals perceive their ‘social capital’ of English language knowledge at different points in their lives. Moving from their former status of ‘student’ to their current status of ‘worker’ has also transformed their perceptions of whether it is beneficial or not to belong to the community of (English) language users. The idea of social

mobility –which was a more prevalent factor in their early phases of language learning –does not seem to be as dominant as a desire to gain professional mobility. Using Darvin and Norton’s (2015) words to sum up:

Agents are positioned in the social space based on the volume, composition, and trajectory of their capital. As the rules of the game vary in different fields and continually evolve, the value of one’s capital also shifts as it travels across time and space. (p. 44).

A great number of researchers are interested in English education in China and as this focus appears to be gaining ground, I hope this study can offer them a distinct lens with which to see this growing phenomena of ‘English Fever’ through globalization. The unique perspective I offer here is through that of students from rural China. Hopefully, with an increased common effort of many researchers, the negative effects of English learning in rural China can be reduced, even eliminated.

Finally, although I have focused on perceptions (rather than beliefs) throughout this research and final writing of the findings, it is interesting to finish with this summary.

[B]eliefs are social, but also individual; unique, but also shared; rational and emotional; diverse, but also uniform. (...) [B]eliefs can either act as tools for empowerment or, on the other hand, as powerful constraints on learning second/foreign languages. (Ferreira Barcelos, & Kalaja, 2003, p. 235)

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Appendices

Interviewer: Luyan Teng (T)

Interviewee: Lily (L)

Date of interview: November 27th, 2013 Time: 19:30-20:36

| The record of Lily's face-to-face interview | | | | |
|---|------|------------------------|--|-------------|
| code | who | type | key words | time |
| LF2F_L_CEL_20131127 | Lily | face-to-face interview | current English learning: cultural activities held in her college | 19:30-19:36 |
| LF2F_L_JOB_20131127 | Lily | face-to-face interview | her part-time job: her experience and feelings in the private English tutorial institution | 19:37-19:50 |
| LF2F_L_CEL_20131127 | Lily | face-to-face interview | current English learning: her English learning in the college current English learning | 19:51-20:06 |
| LF2F_L_JOB_20131127 | Lily | face-to-face interview | her anxiety about the career and future | 20:07-20:18 |
| LF2F_L_CEL_20131127 | Lily | face-to-face interview | her opinions of her teachers in her college | 20:19-20:24 |
| LF2F_L_FAM_20131127 | Lily | face to face interview | her family background and the effect on her English learning | 20:25-20:30 |
| LF2F_L_CEL_20131127 | Lily | face to face interview | her opinions about her teacher in college and English learning future plan | 20:31-20:36 |

LF2F_L_CEL_20131127

T- How is it going recently?

L- Everything goes well. And I am busy preparing the performance for Christmas.

T- Do you celebrate other foreign festivals? For example, the Halloween, the Thanks Giving Day.....

L- No. We just celebrate Christmas.

T- What kinds of activities do you hold?

L- Dancing, singing or something like that.

T- Are these English songs?

L- Not actually. Most of the songs are English songs but some of them are Korean pop-songs. You know, Korean songs are popular now. In fact, we want to hold a party, but some of students are not open-minded enough. They are a little shy. So it is difficult to have a crazy party, because we are the only class whose major is English, in our college. In fact, we pay much attention to the culture of English. Our teacher will ask us to familiar the culture, too. And I find during my preparation for the performance, I know something about the culture as well.

T- Do you have any course about the culture?

L- Yes. We have a course called Intercultural Communication whose content is to introduce the European and American culture briefly. But I feel it does not work well, because we just learn it from the text book rather than experience it in person. So it can not impress me deeply.

LF2F_L_JOB_20131127

T- Do you still act as an English teacher in a training school in your spare time?

L- Yes. I go to the school every weekend.

T- What do you think about your teaching in the private English tutorial institution?

L- I feel good. Especially when my students cooperate with me closely. But if there are some naughty students, the teaching will be painful. There is a class which I took over from other teacher. The students do not know me well and there are almost all boys which are very naughty except two girls in class. Every class means suffering to me. I have known the same feeling to yours. When I was in secondary school, I could

not understand why you were so angry when some boys caused trouble in class. But now I know. Even some students ignored me in my class, I would feel almost crazy. In contrast, there is another class in which all students are obedient and they honor me which makes me happy and confident.

T- How old are your students?

L- They are about 13 years old. I think it is a good age to follow the teacher. When they go through the rebellious phase, they will challenge the teacher to show they have grown up. It must be painful and knotty. This weekend I will celebrate Christmas with my students. They are keen on this kind of activity and whenever I hold interesting activities they are wild with joy and love me more. And in most cases, I teach them English by games which are very different from the classes I had when I was a pupil. In my area, there are many English training schools, and it is heard that almost every school asks the teacher to design games to improve the interests of students to English. Or else, they will lose their students.

T- Does the school provide you equipment for your games?

L- No. In most of time I just play some simple games with my students. Because there are only ten students in my class and I can make everybody take part in my games.

LF2F_L_CEL_20131127

T- Now, you are in Grade Two in your college. Do you have compact curriculum?

L- Yes, especially the last term. You know, we have three-year course and the next year we will go to the term of practice. After winter vocation, we can have class only for one term. And in this year, we are ranged many professional courses, for example, oral, reading, phonetics, writing and intercultural communication, etc. I have found phonetics is very useful and very important. When I was in secondary school, I did not have chance to improve my speech sounds because I was busy with my exam. Neither my teacher nor I cared my pronunciation. Now, I have been a teacher so I have duty to make sure my pronunciation is correct. You know what? Until I came to college, I finally made clear the vowels and consonants! It is inconceivable! I love the

professional training and I love to put my knowledge into practice. But I hate the Graded Examinations in Speakers of Other Languages. In Spain, is there also such kind of test?

T- Yes. For English, Spanish and other languages, there are all grade tests.

L- It is said that the grade test must include oral, listening, reading and writing, which is different from the test in China. You know, in CET-4(College English Test Band 4), there is no oral test, which makes many college students learn the “Mute English”.

LF2F_L_JOB_20131127

L- In future, I want to go to a primary school to be a “formal” teacher (meaning she wants to be a teacher in public school). I have heard that it is very difficult, right?

T- It depends. If you want to go to a public school, it is required that you must attend the test which is organized by the local government. In common, the candidates are required to have a bachelor degree and a Teacher Certification. Do you have these?

L- No, I can only get the college degree after my graduation. So, in order to get a bachelor degree, I planned to receive further education. But now I found I am busy and if I participate in further education, I have to go to other university because my college can't offer further education for us which makes it more difficult. I am afraid that I could not get through the test. Some of my peers whose grade is perfect in my class attended the test but they failed.

T- If you do not go to public school, the degree may be not so important. For example, if you go to a company, I believe the employer will focus on your ability rather than your degree.

L- Really? It makes me not so worried. And I believe my teaching experience in the training school will give me more opportunities because I am not a real freshman in fact. After all, I will have a try to accept the further education because the bachelor degree is a bridge which leads me to a higher and better position. What's more, my classmates who failed in the test have left the copies of all the materials for me..

T- In your class, how many classmates plan to receive further education?

L-About half of them want to do this. So it affects me because most of the peers around me plan to receive the further education. If I didn't do this, it seems a little weird. So in most of cases, we would help each other.

T- Does your college encourage you to receive the further education?

L- Not really. The best major in my college is Foreign Nursing so our department does not get enough attention. You know what? We even do not have a foreign language teacher! But there are tens of foreign language teachers in the Foreign Nursing Department. It is so unfair.

T- Do you think your college pays enough attention to students' English learning?

L- I think it is. Because English is very important for the students of Foreign Nursing. Our college focuses on the nursing English not educational English which makes us a little upset. But our college still held many English activities. Last month, an oral English competition was held and I attended it.

T- Oh? What is the result?

L- I was eliminated in the final. But I still think it was a great progress for me because it gave me a chance to show my oral in numbers of people and let me know my oral still needs improving. I thought the main reason of my failure was lack of practice in my daily life. I felt a little nervous when I was asked to make the improvisation. However, if there is such an activity in the future, I still would love to attend. Because I found during my preparation, I have improved my oral. During my teaching in the training school, I found there was little opportunity to practice English except some classroom expressions. The English grade of the students in my class is very basic, so when I speak some complex English, they could not catch my words and I have to translate the sentences into Chinese. Day by day, I gave it up.

LF2F_L_CEL_20131127

T- In your college, does your teacher speak English in class totally?

L- Yes. Our teachers try their best to communicate with us in English totally in class. In most time, we can catch the teachers' words.

T- In your class, are activities held frequently?

L- Not really. Only in oral class, our teacher would ask us to finish some tasks. For example, our teacher often asks some of students to perform a short play or organize a debate competition. We all like this kind of activity. It is much better than the common course.

T- Do you read some English literatures in your spare time?

L- No.

T- Doesn't your teacher ask or recommend some works on English literatures to you?

L- No. They just recommend us to watch some English movies or learn English songs. In fact, even our teacher did not ask me to do this, I still watch English movies in my spare time. There is internet in my dormitory and I have a computer. So it is very convenient to watch movies and learn English songs.

T- Do you think these can improve your English?

L- No. Because when I watch movies, I would focus on the story not the language.

T- Since your major is preschool education, do you read some educational books?

L- Yes. I have read the Educational Psychology and Professional Ethics of Teachers. These books are required in my curriculum. In my daily life, I do not like reading.

...

T- In your college, is there any English club?

L-Yes. There is. When I was in Grade One, I attended English club. But I found it is not useful. They just teach me how to pronounce some words and read some passages to us. I think this activity is like our class and not interesting at all. What's worse, their pronunciation is not perfect. Some of them have accent. So after two or three times, I never attended this club. I would rather stay at dormitory to surf the internet.

T- Would you improve your English by internet?

L- Yes. I often surf the oral internet. I found many resources about oral from the computer. I like British English most. I think it is very graceful. I do not like American English. It is exaggerated, especially the mouth shape which makes me feel uncomfortable. And I feel American English is hard to catch, because there are much

liaison, contraction and reduction. In addition, there are many slang terms which are difficult to understand without the historical or cultural backgrounds.

LF2F_L_FAM_20131127

T- Do your parents support you to be a temporary teacher in the English training school?

L- Absolutely. But at first my father opposed me because he was afraid that being a temporary teacher would do harm to my own learning. After I explained what I did and gained in the training school, he gives me his full backing.

T- Do you discuss your English learning with your parents frequently?

L- Yes. They concern my learning very much. They often ask me something about it. For example, have you made progress recently? Did you attend some activities? What is your feeling about your study? Did you get a good grade in your test? But they don't discuss the details of learning with me because their English grade is not good enough. My mother even never learnt one single English word. During my secondary school, they supervised me. After I came to college, you know, because my college is a little far away from my hometown, they couldn't supervise me in person. But I am a hard-working girl and I will supervise myself in order to live up to the hopes of my parents.

T- It is great. Do your parents support you to attend activities?

L- Completely. I have mentioned I attended an oral English competition, although I was eliminated in the final, my mother felt very happy and proud. She told me what was important was the process rather than the result of competition. As long as I attended the competition, it means I challenge myself successfully.

T- Do you have a good relationship with your parents?

L- After I came to the college, we developed a good relationship. When I was in secondary school, my parents kept nagging at me which made me almost crazy. But now, they have no chance to do this to me and with my growing up, I understand my parents feeling. So our relationship becomes better than before.

LF2F_L_CEL_20131127

T- What degree do your teachers have in your college?

L- Most of them have master degree.

T- Do you have a close relationship with your teacher after class?

L- No. My teachers will leave school as soon as the class is over. We seldom have chance to contact with them. Even we have problems about our learning, we would rather consult our classmates than confer with our teachers or we would ask them when we see them next time.

T- In that case, do you think what kind of role your teacher plays in your English learning?

L- A leading role. They just lead me how to learn English and introduce some methods. It all depends on myself whether I can learn it well. It is different from my own experience in the English training school. In that school, my main job is to cause my students' interesting of learning. And many children said that I was just their friend rather than a traditional teacher. These words make me confident and have sense of success. However, I feel a little worried that I am not a dignified teacher so that some children would not follow my order in class.

...

T- What kind of job do you want to take in future?

L- Most of my peers hope to be a teacher in kindergarten. But for me, the best choice is to be a teacher in primary school.

T- Will your grade in college affect you when you hunt for a job?

L- I am not very clear. The job of being a temporary teacher in the English training school is introduced by my monitor. At that time, the school lacked English teachers seriously, so my progress of interview was simple. The principal asked me to give some classes to the children. I thought my performance was bad. But the principal said that I laid a solid foundation of English and my teaching style was open which would be popular among the kids. What is more, she thought my oral was not bad, so

she still employed me. According to my own experience, I think maybe the grade in college will have an influence when I hunt for a job.

T- Have you ever thought of taking other jobs? For example, translator, international tour guide, etc.

L- I have thought of being an international tour guide. I even prepared materials for it. My mother encouraged me to get this certificate, because she thought it was related to English and it would help me to find a job. But eventually I found that the application fee was high and the test was difficult, so I gave up. Maybe when I have time in the future, I would have a try.

T- Have you ever thought of going abroad?

L- Seldom. You know it needs financial support which is beyond economical ability of my family. But great majority of students in the English training school plan to go abroad which is the main reason why they come to this school. Of course, the determination is made by the parents of these kids. But I found that parents would play an important role on their kids' choices. There is no need to explain to them how important English is.

T- Do you think English is important if someone don't plan to go abroad?

L- I think it depends on the career. If a person just do a common job, for example, a salesman, a waiter in local restaurant, a cashier, English is not necessary. But if you do some related jobs, it will be essential.

T- What is your opinion of adults learning English?

L- If adults learn English, it shows English is use for them. After all, nobody would like to take time and money to learn something useless.

| The record of Lily's online interview | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------|------------|---------|
| code | name | type | date | duration | place |
| LOC_L_20130612 | Lily | online chatting | 12/06/2013 | 40 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20130703 | Lily | online chatting | 03/07/2013 | 45 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20130816 | Lily | online chatting | 16/08/2013 | 50 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20130918 | Lily | online chatting | 18/09/2013 | 42 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20150918 | Lily | online chatting | 18/09/2015 | 39 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20151022 | Lily | online chatting | 22/10/2015 | 40 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20151102 | Lily | online chatting | 02/11/2015 | 31 minutes | college |
| LOC_L_20151219 | Lily | online chatting | 19/12/2015 | 35 minutes | home |

LOC_L_20130612

T- What are your college and major now?

L- My college is Ya'an Vocational College. And my major is English Education.

T- Your mayor is the same to mine.

L- Not exactly. My mayor is mainly about Preschool Education.

T- Why did you choose teaching as your major? Do you love kids?

L- According my parents' advice. They want me to be a teacher. In my own opinion, I don't like children. In fact, I want to be a tour guide. So funny. Haha (laughs) I can travel every day.

T- Why didn't you choose the related (tour guide) major?

L- My parents don't agree. They thought a tour guide had to go to many places and would be exposed to the weather. It is so toilsome.

T- Your parents thought being a teacher would be comfortable?

L- Well, they believe it's comfortable because a teacher can stay in an office and won't be exposed to the weather. he he (laughs). I think maybe it is related to their professions. As I have mentioned, my father is a construction worker in Tibet. His work is so hard and unsettled. My mother is a housewife and she worries about my father all the time. Neither of them got much education. I am the only child in my family. They hope I have a settled life in the future.

T- Yeah, being a teaching means you can have a stable job and a settled life.

L- Besides my parents, most of my relatives hope me to be a teacher in the future.

They said female teacher can get married easily. Ha ha....(laughs)

T- What is your own opinion about that?

L- I think maybe they are right. It is said female teacher and male civil servant make the best couples. Although the salary of teacher is not high, they have winter and summer holidays, which means they can have more spare time to finish their domestic duties.

T- Yeah, I have heard of this. It is said the best couple is male civil servant and female teachers.

L- Yes, I want to get this kind of marriage and my father doesn't need to leave my mother and me. I don't want my father to be so tired.

T- When did you start to learn English?

L- Hmm...I began to learn English at secondary school and I was the English delegate in my class. My English teacher was very nice, patient and very professional so English was my favorite subject.

T- How much time and energy did you devote to your English learning?

L- A lot. Because I loved it, I loved to spend a lot of time and energy on it. I also bought many English reference books, attended the make-up lessons and so on. In a nutshell, I invested a lot into it.

T- Besides your liking English, was there any other reason urging you to learn English?

L- Because it is useful.

T- Can you give me more detail?

L- let me think....(after approximately 20 seconds) When I hunt for a job, or when I go travelling abroad, or something like that....In fact, I am not so clear...anyway, it is useful, hmm... it should be.

LOC_L_20130703

T- How do spend your spare time?

L- I used to go shopping. But now I don't have time to do it, because I am a temporary English teacher in a private English tutorial institution. I have to spend my weekends and holidays with my students.

T- But you ever said you didn't like kids.

L- At the very beginning, it was. But now, after I spent some days with some kids, I find I love them. In essence, I never hate kids. But when I was a student, my teachers were serious to me which made me feel terrible. So I didn't like to be a teacher at that time. But I fell in love with the kids the time I met them.

T- Congratulations! I am so glad you choose a profession that you really like.

L- Thanks! Now, I am a teacher in a training center during my summer vocation. On the one hand, I want to practice to be a teacher. On the other hand, I want to earn some money to release my father's economic burden. I think young man should be independent.

T- What are your parents' opinions on this job?

L- At first, they opposed severely. They worried that this job would do harm to my study. They told me not to be anxious about the financial problems of my family. So long as I work hard on my study, they can overcome any difficulties. I explained to them for several times. Now, they finally understand doing this job not only will not do harm to my study, but also can enhance my English learning. They support me completely.

T- What do you teach your students?

Lily- Simple English. For example, teach them how to greet others and some practical daily English. Most of my students have a plan to go abroad in the future so they need learn practical English.

T- What kind of relationship do you have with your students?

Lily- They told me they loved me. In my class, the main aim is to enhance their interests of English. So I have to design some games and other interesting tasks for

them. They like my games and me. I always believe that the best teacher is their own interests.

LOC_L_20130816

T- How much time do you spend on your English in your college?

L- Most of time. You know, English is my major, so we have many courses about it including listening class, phonics class, comprehensive class and so on.

T- Do you like English?

L- Yes, that is one of the reasons why I chose it as my major. I know so long as I learn English well, I can get better job and then release my father. During my English learning, I get my self-confidence.

LOC_L_20130918

T- What about your college life?

Lily- It is good. But I am a little busy, because I have many classes.

T- What are your main courses in your college?

L- We need to learn some professional courses, for example, Comprehensive English, listening, Phonetics and Intercultural Communication. 04. After learning these courses, I found that the knowledge I gained in secondary school was so limited. I had many problems to be solved: my accent, my listening, my vocabulary and so on.

T- Have you solved your problems?

L- I think most of them have been solved. All of my teachers have a Master Degree or above, and they are amazing. They communicate with us in English in class, and at the beginning I couldn't catch their words. But now, I find I have no difficulty in communication. There are native English teachers in our college. I often have a chat with them. So, my oral English, has improved, hmm...much. Ha ha (laughs). You know, my oral was so poor before.

T- Most of your classmates suffered many problems then. I should apologize.

L- Ha ha (laughs). There is no need (to apologize). (We) can't do anything. We are all from rural regions. (We) can't find...

T- access

L-...yeah, access, to practice oral English. The most important thing is there is no oral test in the examination.

LOC_L_20151022

T- Is the school you work in public or private school?

L- Private...(sigh)

T- Didn't you sit the test (organized by the local government to recruit teachers)?

L- I sat once at the beginning of this year. I had passed the written examination but failed in the interview.

T- Why?

L- I have no "*guanxi*". It is said that it is match-fixing. (sigh)... the road is always tough for the poor children.

T- Is there any other test recently?

L- I don't have enough time to prepare (the test) recently. There is huge pressure in this private school all the time. (sigh) It is very easy to be fired...even because of a tiny mistake.

T- Do you still plan to attend the examination (to enter public schools)?

L- Yes. the teacher in public school gets better salary and be more steady, so I will continue to prepare for it. Recently, I have bought many reference books for the test.

T- Do you still intend to stay in Ya An?

L- No, I prefer Chengdu city. After all, it is capital of our province so there are more opportunities. Besides, Chengdu is nearer to my hometown than Ya An, so I can go back to see my parents frequently. Even if I couldn't enter public school, I still want to go to Chengdu, and the private school is also ok for me.

T- Why?

L- As I mentioned, there more opportunities. The most important is that if I work in Chengdu, it is very like that I can settle in this city: encountering a husband working in Chengdu, purchasing an apartment, and bearing babies as resident of Chengdu. Haha (laughs)... The last one is the most important. I am from rural town, so I met so many difficulties. I don't want my children suffer the similar difficulties. I should word hard to offer them a better future.

LOC_L_20151102

T- Where do you work now?

Lily- In a primary school at Ya An.

T- Is the school you work in a public or private school?

L- Private...(sigh)

T- Don't you attend test (organized by the local government to recruit teachers)?

L- I attended once at the beginning of this year. I had passed the written examination but failed in interview.

T- Why?

L- I have no "guanxi". It is heard that it is match-fixing (it means there is a cheat in the examinations that the one who will pass the exam is cut and dried at the very beginning.) (sigh)... the road is always tough for the poor children.

T- Is there any other test recently?

L- I have no enough time to prepare (the test) recently. There is huge pressure in this private school all the time. (sigh) It is very likely to be fired...even because of a tiny mistake.

T- Are there any your classmates who work in the public school?

L- Seldom. There are only few of my classmates working in the public school, but not as the formal teachers, only as the temporary ones. It is very hard to enter public schools.

T- Why?

L- First of all, the examinations are so competitive. For example, there is only one quota for a primary school to be an English teacher while the number of applicants as many as 362. So crazy, right? Secondly, even you pass the first written examination, it is impossible to pass the interview if you don't have guanxi. It is Guanxi not the ability that is the most important in interview. Most of classmates are from rural towns, just like me. So it is too difficult for us to enter public schools.

T- Why do you think guanxi is the most important in the interview?

L- Once I have attended one examination whose quota is only one and passed the first written examination as the number one. My score is 21 points higher than the third one (in generally, the number of interviewees is accorded 3:1 based on the quota). To be honest, I am almost sure that I would gain admission since it is very hard for me to lose more than 21 points during the interview. Right? Everybody knows that! It is common knowledge. however, after the interview, I was noticed to be failed because my score was 22 points lower than the third one! Can you believe that? Shit, just shit!!!

L- So sometimes, I can't help complaining my parents. Why didn't they work hard while they were young? If they did, my life was much easier than now. I know, such kind of thoughts is incorrect and it would hurt my parents. I just can't help imaging, if only I was not from such kind of family.

LOC_ L_20151219

T- To what extent does English acquisition affect your work?

L- The effect is huge. For job hunting it is necessary. And during work, it is considerably important. As you know, my major is English, so if I want to find a relevant job, English is the whole premise. Of course, other abilities are necessary.

T- What kind of ability?

L- Oral English, grammar and so on.

T- These belongs to English acquisition.

L- As well as confidence and attitude.

T- Attitude?

L- Yes, you know, my students are very young. Most of them are lovely as well as naughty. In common, they don't like serious teachers. So I must act to be lovely and lively. I need to treat them as friends, because I found most of kids didn't want to be treated as kids and they love to be treated as adults. Sometimes, I play jokes with them, some of the kids would respond to me as 'childish'.

T- If you didn't take on a job relevant to English, do you think it is useful or not?

L-Uh, to be honest, I don't think it is very useful. Since there are no enough opportunities to use English. Communicate with Chinese in English? It is ridiculous unless it happens in an English class. In that case, it is so lucky that I have undertaken a relevant job. Or else, all of my effort made on English will become in vain. Oh, I can't imagine it. It is almost a kind of crime since it is a serious kind of waste.

Interviewer: Luyan Teng (T)

Interviewee: Serena (S)

Date of interview: November 29th, 2013 Time: 11:30-13:35

| The record of Serena's face to face interview | | | | |
|---|--------|------------------------|--|-------------|
| code | who | type | key words | time |
| LF2F_S_PEL_20131129 | Serena | face to face interview | the purpose of her English learning both in secondary school and college | 11:30-11:52 |
| LF2F_S_CEL_20131129 | Serena | face to face interview | the current situation of her English learning | 11:58-12:19 |
| LF2F_S_HOB_20131129 | Serena | face to face interview | her hobbies, especially the hobbies related to English learning | 12:27-12:56 |
| LF2F_S_FAM_20131129 | Serena | face to face interview | her family members and the relatives who has effects on her English learning | 13:00-13:35 |

LF2F_S_PEL_20131129

T- When did you start to learn English?

S- When I entered secondary school.

T- I heard that English was taught in some primary school.

S- I heard of it, too. But I didn't learn English until I entered secondary school. Most of my classmates were same to me.

T- What was the situation of your English learning at first?

S- I like English. I think it is very interesting. But I am not good at it. I have difficulties to remember English words. It is common to miss letters or add some letters when I write words. I don't know why and it annoys me a lot. It seems difficult to write them correctly.

T- Do you still have this problem now?

S- It is much better. I find many ways to remember words so it is better now. But sometimes the problem appears again.

T- What is the purpose of your English learning at the beginning?

S- Maybe at that time I was young so I did not think about it so much. The main reason was that English was the required subject in school.

T- Do you have any personal expectation for English? For example, self-development or something like that?

S- I did not think so far. For personal expectation, Hmm, I thought speaking English was very fashionable. Just imagine that someday I met a foreigner with my friends in a crowded market. The foreigner turned to us to look for help, nobody can talk to him except me. I could communicate with him in fluent English. How cool I would be! Ha ha...(laughs)

T- That's funny. How about now? What is the purpose of your current English learning?

S- It is much clearer now. For me, I hope English acquisition can help me when I hunt for a job.

T- Do you think it (English) will (be helpful)?

S- Certainly. You ever told us that we should walk out and adventure the outside world. And when I really went out, I found a new world. I encountered many different people and made new friends. And I had much experience different from before. In this new world, I found English was important since it served as an important and useful tool for communicating with the people all around the world. It seemed that the imagination had come true. Of course, the difference is that many people can talk with foreigner and my English is not as good as in imagination.

T- Ha ha...(laughs)

S- Once I ever met a very handsome foreign guy when I took plane. Very very handsome. He just sat beside me, and I couldn't help peeping him secretly. His face was as perfect as a sculpture, especially his sideface. I really want to say something to him. But I was not dare to do that. For one hand, I was shy. For another hand, my oral English is so poor and I do not have courage to do so. What a pity! I missed such a precious chance to get to know so handsome guy. If I could speak English fluently,

maybe I had gotten my boyfriend in this way. Hei hei....(laugh shyly). So I must improve my English, especially oral English.

LF2F_S_CEL_20131129

T- Do you have any oral English class in the college?

S- No. Only the students in English major have the oral English class. And I ever talked about that the college did not pay much attention to students' English learning. We have two English classes every week, and every class lasts approximately two hours. I do think that this situation should be improved.

T- What is the main content in the English class?

S- In the first academic year, we learned public English, and all of students use the same textbook in the first year. And since this term, we have learned English relevant to my major, it is called "nursing English".

T- What is it mainly about?

S- The vocabulary about some medicine as well as pharmakon, some chemical compositions and something like that. It is difficult and complicated.

T- Do you think it would be helpful?

S- Of course. I believe it is very important. Usually, there are some foreign hospitals coming to employ nurses every year, such as Japan, Korea and Singapore. It is heard that the salary in foreign countries is very considerable. I want to try. You know, nurse salary in our nation is very high while the work is very tough. What's more, the relationship between medical personnel and patient has been increasingly nervous. It is common that the family members attack medical personnel when patient could not be saved, even though it is not our fault. Every time, I read such kind of news, I will become very worried and scared. We will enter practice period next year, I am so nervous. Is it better in other countries?

T- I am not very clear. Maybe it is.

S- I seldom read such kind of news from foreign website. I guess it is better. So I must try my best to go abroad.

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T- Since you can't accept professional oral English training in college, how do you improve it?

S- I can only rely myself. I watched English movies, listened the dialogue carefully and then imitated.

T- Does it work?

S- No. I found it was very difficult to imitate, especially some pronunciations. It seems that there was something wrong with my tongue. My pronunciation sounds so weird. What's worse, even I tried my best to imitate, I couldn't judge whether my imitation was correct or not. So the result was not good.

T- What about other aspects, for example, reading, writing and listening?

S- Listening is also poor since I have few opportunities to practice. However, reading and writing are much better. I am preparing for the CET-4 test and have done much practice. What's more, I have attended in extra English training class, of course, it is not free. But under the guidance of professional teachers, I found my reading and writing are much better than before.

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LF2F_S_HOB_20131129

T- What are your hobbies?

S- I like drawing. My aunt works as a designer in a company. She ever said I had talent in drawing. Besides drawing, I like movies, especially the old movies. You ever let us watch an old movie "Go With the Wind". Do you remember that? Since then on, I have fallen into the old movies. After I entered college, I appreciated many movies, such as "Waterloo Bridge", "Casablanca", "Roman Holiday" "The Godfather" "Ghost" "Forrest Gump" and so on. They are so classic and touched.

T- Can you catch the works without subtitles?

S- Oh, no. It is so difficult. I have to rely on subtitles, especially when I watched them for the first time. I even couldn't recognize the actors and actresses for the first time. It seemed that most of foreigner had similar face. It is really hard for me to make clear

who is who. So I need to watch them for several times. But after I watched them for several times, I could catch some dialogues.

T- During this process, has your English improved?

S- Yes, especially the listening. Although it seemed not offer great help for my oral English, my listening had improved a lot, especially the moment I watched through the whole movie. The effect was amazing. However, it couldn't last for a long time. So I do think the learning environment is very important. If I could come to America, and all of people around me speak English, I believe I can speak fluent English in a not long time.

LF2F_S_FAM_20131129

T- Would you like to talk about your family?

S- Hmm... in fact...I am a left-behind child. He he...(smile embarrassedly)

T- Where do your parents work?

S- Zhejiang.

T- It is not far away from your college.

S- Yes (answered happily). That's why I chose this college. I can see my parents more frequently than before.

T- How often did you see your parents before?

S- Hmm...once a year? Sometimes more than one year.

T- Did you miss them then?

S-...not much...a little bit...as you know, I have got used to it. Since I was six years old, they have been working there.

T- Who took care of you then?

S- My grandparents.

T- Can your parents speak English?

S- A bit. They learned English when they were in secondary school. However, they said they had forgotten totally after so many years. But they told me they had reviewed some English words and sentences after they went to Zhejiang.

T- Really?

S- My parents work at a furniture factory and my father makes furniture and sometimes works as a salesman when necessary. It is very common that foreigners come to purchase furniture. Usually they are accompanied with translator and seldom communicate with my father directly. However, after several years my father learned some English words, mainly about the price and style of furniture. So even while foreigners communicate with translators, my father could understand what they mainly talk about and then he could offer more pointed suggestions. It made him so happy so he often told me to study English hard because it was very useful.

T- How about your mother?

S- She has learned some vocabulary about furniture, too. She likes to test my vocabulary. Usually in this way, “Do you know how to speak ‘shafa’ (sofa, 沙发 in Chinese) in English?” In most of cases, I could answer her question, but sometimes I could not because the vocabulary was very professional, such as ‘hutch’, ‘foot-stool’ and something like that. Can I know these words? They are so complicated. When I couldn’t answer her questions, she would tell me the name with great pride. It is a kind of showing off. Hmm... I found that sometimes adults are childish.

...

T- Is there any people who have an effect on your English learning?

S- What kind of effect, good or bad?

T- Both.

S- Let me think about it. Hmm...It seems that nobody had a bad effect on my English learning. In terms of good effect, I think my aunt has a great effect.

T- Your aunt?

S- Yes. She is my father’s sister and works as a designer in Singapore. She is the good example of my whole family. Her experience sounds like an inspirational story. My aunt did a bad job in *gaokao* since her mathematics was very bad. After she graduated from senior high school, she went to a small clothing factory as a worker of production line in Guangdong Province (a province lies in the developed southeast of

China). She liked drawing since she was a child and was very good at drawing. So during her working in the clothing factory, she learned designing in her spare time and several years later she finally became a designer. Of course, she had quitted the job of the small clothing factory and found a new job in a big costume designing factory based on her good drawing skills and rich experiences in costume making. Since she was in secondary school, English was the best subject for her. Even if she couldn't go to university, she has continued her English learning for those years. So when her company decide to establish a new branch in Singapore, she won the opportunity among many competitors because of her English acquisition. And now she married a Singaporean and leads a very happy life. She ever told me most of her peers in that small clothing factory still took on similar jobs and left their children in hometown.

...

I have asked her why she was so farsighted that kept learning English for a long time but she told me in fact when she was learning English, she was not very clear what benefits English could bring to her. For one hand, she liked English. For another hand, she held a belief: maybe one day English could be profitable for her even though she was not so clear what kind of profit would be.

We all think English plays a significant role in turning-point of her life. Most of colleagues in the clothing factory returned their hometown and lived a common life after they worked for several years.

My father frequently said when he was in secondary school, he could learn many of subjects well except English. While my aunt was only good at English and did bad job in other subjects. Now their fates are so different. During this process, English seems play a very important role. So my father always encouraged me to learn English well, hoping one day I could get such opportunity to change my whole life.

| The record of Serena's online interview | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----------------|------------|------------|------------------------------|
| code | name | type | date | duration | place |
| LOC_S_20130619 | Serena | online chatting | 19/06/2013 | 40 minutes | College |
| LOC_S_20130922 | Serena | online chatting | 22/09/2013 | 41 minutes | College |
| IOC_S_20131227 | Serena | online chatting | 27/12/2013 | 32 minutes | College |
| LOC_S_20140412 | Serena | online chatting | 12/04/2014 | 38 minutes | College |
| LOC_S_20141021 | Serena | online chatting | 21/10/2014 | 47 minutes | College |
| LOC_S_20150619 | Serena | online chatting | 19/06/2015 | 32 minutes | workplace (Shanghai City) |
| LOC_S_20150922 | Serena | online chatting | 22/09/2015 | 41 minutes | workplace (hometown) |
| | | | | | |

LOL_S_20130619

T- Which college are you now?

S- I am in a health college in Jiangsu Province.

T- It is far away from Sichuan Province. Most of your classmates have chosen colleges in Sichuan Province.

S- Yes, it is because my parents work in Zhejiang Province. You know, Jiangsu Province is very close to Zhejiang Province. So I can go to see my parents frequently.

T- What is your major?

S- My major is Nursing.

T- Why did you choose nursing as your major?

S- My parents made the decision for me. They believe it will be helpful when they become old or sick. What is more, my grandma is in a poor health. I want to do something helpful. I have been brought up by my grandma since I was six. I love her and hope her be well.

T- Do you like nursing?

S- To be honest, no. Because nursing is very tough.

T- What's your own interesting?

S- Me? My interesting is not the most important. Hmm, in addition, I am not sure

about my real interesting. I believe in my parents' choice. Whatever they did will be good and most appropriate for me.

LOL_S_20130922

T- How is your current English learning?

S- How to say? It is not as good as I expected. When I was in secondary as well as senior high school, I had to remember a lot of words, recite texts and learn grammar. You know it was very boring. But I could understand this, after all, the main purpose of English learning was to get high scores in *gaokao* at that time. I never imagined that after I entered college, I had to do the same things. Should not be it much more interesting to learn English in college?

T- Are there any activities of English in your college?

S- Few activities. During the whole last year, there were only three activities. An English song competition, an English speech competition and a Halloween party. In fact, I don't think the Halloween party had any relationship with English except the name since everybody just dressed up and communicated all in Chinese. It was ridiculous.

T- Did you attend these activities?

S- No. I am not good at singing and my English is not good enough to attend the English speech competition. Once I was told that there was an English club where the members could have access to communicating with native speakers. It caused my interests and I paid for it to be a member. However, when I went to the club I was so disappointed. There were a great number of Chinese students but only two foreigners. Are you kidding me? It was very difficult to get close to them no mention that communicate with them. It was only a trap and I was cheated.

.....

S- I do think the learning atmosphere is very important for English learning. Just imagine that every student learn English so hard in a class, if you don't study hard, you just look like a freak. It is pity our college seems not pay much attention to our

English learning. Few activities and foreign teachers. So the atmosphere of English learning in our college is not good enough.

LOL_S_20131227

S- I have to tell you a sad news.

T- What?

S- I am afraid I can't pass though the test of CET-4 again.

T- You just finished the examination and the result has not come out yet.

S- Yes, but I feel bad. I did a very bad job in the test. I want to cry. What should I do?

T- Take it easy.

S- I feel so ashamed that I can't encounter my father.

T- Oh, it is almost exaggerated.

S- No, you don't know the truth. It is the second time that I have attended this test. Before I attended the test, I took part in a training class and it cost much. However, I couldn't pass at that time. And for the test of this time, I took part in the training class again, of course, it cost much one more time. 😞 (expression of crying) I have a strong feeling that I would waste the money again. This is the money earned by their hard toil! What should I do?

T- Did you parents say something about it?

S- No. I didn't tell them. I am not dare to tell them this sad news. I am almost a malefactor.

LOL_S_20140412

T- How is your current English learning?

S- Not bad. I am preparing for the CET-6.

T- It means that you have got the CET-4 credential.

S- He he...(gentle laughs). Yes, I have got it. I am so sorry that I simply got carried away last time when I communicated with you. At that time, I believed that I would fail and felt so sad. I...I just can't control myself. I had been crying for almost one

week. Oh, the feeling was so.....bad. Would you laugh at me?

T- He he... you guess?

.....

T- Did you share the good news with your parents?

S- Of course. Once I got the result of the test knowing that I had passed, I called my father and he was very happy and proud. I also told him that at the beginning I didn't think I could pass the test and felt so ashamed for him. I felt guilty for wasting his money. My father told me never to think like that. So long as I needed, he would support me with any hesitation, both morally and economically. You know what? When I heard his words, I almost burst into tears. I was so touched. And this time, my parents get to know that I am preparing for the CET-6 test, they give me much money and told me to attend the training class. In fact, the money they gave me is much more than I need.

T- It is because they love you.

S- Yes, yes, I see. It seems the first time that I have the truth and obvious feeling that my parents love me so much. My parents are not good at expressing their love, especially my father. To be honest, I have ever complained for their long-term absence during my growing process. Especially when I saw many of my peers can be accompanied by their parents. I can't help complaining them. I know they have no choice, and what they wanted was to save money. However, I couldn't understand that when I was very young.

LOL_S_20141021

T- It seems you are busy now.

S- Yes. I have worked as an intern since this term in a hospital.

T- How is your work?

S- So busy. We had to finish several required courses while we were practicing in the hospital. Now I almost want to cut myself into several pieces to complete all missions.

T- Maybe you don't have enough time to learn English.

S- It is true I am so busy now but I still find time to learn English. When there were few patients in the hospital, I returned to my college to attend English classes secretly.
Ha ha...(laughs)

T- You really devote much time and energy to English learning.

S- Because I was aggravated. I failed again in the test of CET-6 last time.
Ah...(screaming) I am crazy. I doubt whether I had done some evil things in my prolife, so the god punished me not to get CET-6 credential this life.

.....

S- Last month, a Singaporean hospital came to our college to employ nurses. I ever told you that my aunt was in Singapore so I was very excited and went to apply a position. However, there was one requirement for CET-6 credential. For me, game over! Why can't I inherit my aunt's talent of English learning? I am so unfortunate that I inherit my father's.

T- You can try next time.

S- No, I don't think I could have another opportunity. It is not common that the foreign hospital come to our college to look for employees. As you know, our college is not famous at all. Opportunity seldom knocks twice.

LOL_S_20150619

T- Do you begin to work?

S- Yes. Now I am a nurse in a hospital in Shanghai.

T- Congratulations! It is not easy to find a job in Shanghai.

S- That's true. I had failed many times before I got this job. Too many graduates are rushing here to hunt for jobs in this city.

.....

T- What about your job?

S- It's not bad. Although sometimes it is tiring.

T- Do you use English in your work?

S- Often. There are foreign patients in our hospital.

T- Can you communicate with them?

S- Almost...but if they talk about the complex things, it is difficult for me to understand. Elementary communications are OK for me.

T- Good job.

S- Ha ha (laughs). It is not enough and I am making more efforts on English learning. When I first communicated with a foreign patient in English, I was nervous and excited. It's...surprising, and...good. You know, because I finally found my English is useful. You know what? The head nurse praised me which is beyond my imagination because she is always strict with me. I need to work harder in the future. There are more opportunities in the big cities. Simultaneously, there are more pressure.

LOL_S_20150922

T- How are you these days?

S- Just so so.

T- You look kind of upset. Did you have any problem with your work?

S- No...Yes.

T- ?

S- Now, I am in my hometown.

T- What?

S- I have been here for almost two months.

T- Why did you return your hometown?

S- Because my parents decided to return. I had to go with them. My parents are getting old, and I have to take care of them. They only have me to rely on.

T- How about your previous job?

S- I had to quit. I didn't want to... but I had to.

T- Have you found a new job in your hometown?

S- Yes. But it is not as good as my former job. You know how difficult it is to find job in that small town. There are few opportunities. My parents had activated all of their *guanxi* to help me find current job. I did not like this job at all since it has no any

challenges. But my fiancé told me not to worry.

T- Whoa, the little girl has got a fiancé.

S- I am sorry not to tell you earlier. I just know him for several months.

T- Oh, it is so quick that you got engaged to him.

S- Both of our parents urged us to engage, so we followed their requirement.

T- How did you get to know him?

S- You may not believe it but I did meet him on a blind date. I know, it's outdated. But one of my mother's friend introduced him to me and my parents are satisfied with him.

.....

T- Do you think English is useful in your current work?

S- I have to say...no, it's...nothing.

T- Why?

S- Because my job has nothing to do with English.

T- Is it useful in your daily life?

S- Hmm...no. You know, it is a small city, it is not like Shanghai. There are almost no foreigners so there is no chance to speak English.

Interviewer: Luyan Teng (T)

Interviewee: Ding (D)

Date of interview: December 1st, 2013 Time: 13:00-15:00

| The record of Ding's face to face interview | | | | |
|---|------|------------------------|---|-------------|
| code | who | type | key words | time |
| LF2F_D_PEL_2013120 | Ding | face to face interview | the purpose of his English learning (during the period of secondary school, senior high school and college) | 13:00-13:37 |
| LF2F_D_CEL_2013120 | Ding | face to face interview | the current situation of her English learning | 13:40-14:10 |
| LF2F_D_JOB_2013120 | Ding | face to face interview | his plan for the job | 14:12-14:29 |
| LF2F_D_FAM_2013120 | Ding | face to face interview | her parents and the influence to her English learning | 14:30-15:00 |
| | | | | |

LF2F_D_PEL_20131201

T- When did you start to learn English ?

D- I began to learn English when I was in secondary school.

T- Before that, did you have any access to learning English?

D- No, I knew nothing about English before I came to secondary school. I just began with ABC in secondary school.

T- What was your main feeling at the beginning?

D- At first, I supposed it was very interesting. Just imagine that I could speak a foreign language, oh, it was so cool! However, the fact was so different from my imagination. We learned alphabet for more than one month. Can you imagine how boring it was? Just reading, reading and reading, and writing, writing and writing. Again and again. I just felt like a fool. My English was a fat and ugly woman, who was very strict and liked to punished students. She always liked leaving much homework, for example, writing the new letters or words learned during the day for

one hundred times, sometimes, two hundred times. If we could not finish the homework, she would like to punish us through weird ways, such as hitting palm, clutching ears or asking us to jump as a frog. She was a crazy woman and I hated her so much. As a result, I hated English, too.

T- So your English was not good.

D- Of course. It was far away from “not good” but very bad. What was very ridiculous that I didn’t realize the bad effects at all. I was deeply misled by a traditional saying ‘Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry are the strongest powers to the world.’ How stupid I was at that time.

T- Did you attend any extra English class after school?

D- No. The secondary school where I studied was located rural town and there was no English training center. Most of my classmates never attended extra English class.

T- What was the reason for your “bad” English when you were in senior high school? Was it because I also was a crazy woman (joking)?

D- Ha ha (laughs). No, of course not. Although you were kind of strict with us, you were not crazy. Hei hei (laugh gently). After I came to senior high school, I decided to study English firstly. However, it was very difficult to catch up with others since I had fallen behind for such a long time. What you had explained in class seemed a sealed book for me. When one English class was over, I felt like my brain was full of paste and not clear at all. It was very painful to learn it. So, as you know, my English was very poor at the beginning.

T- What was your initial purpose of English learning when you were in high senior high school?

D- At first, I just wanted to keep my English level as middle generally. Because I needed to pass *gaokao* and go to university and it was on condition that my English couldn’t be so bad.

T- Besides *gaokao*, do you have any personal expectation for English acquisition?

D- To be honest, at that time, no. I had ever thought that once I went to university, I would throw English away and never learn it any more. Of course, it only was my

initial thoughts at the first two years of senior high school.

T- Yes, your attitude had changed a lot in the last year of senior high school.

D- Hmm, the reason was obvious. I have told you that the failure of the pilot recruitment was a huge strike for me and it made me realize the importance of English and how stupid I had been.

T- What is your current purpose of English learning?

D- Hmm... How to say? I think it can improve myself.

T- For example?

D- Getting a better job. Although English is not my major but our college still has the requirement about English. But my basic purpose of English learning is to communicate.

T- Communicate? Who do you want to communicate with?

D- The foreigners. There are many foreign teachers and students in our college. I want to communicate with them.

T- Why?

D- I want to know different friends and different cultures. I want to be a wise man who knows many different things. In that case, nobody can look down upon me and I will be respected. So I think English can help me improve myself.

LF2F_D_CEL_20131201

T- How is your English now?

D- It is much better than before. I have worked on it a lot.

T- What have you done to study English?

D- A lot. Oh, it is a painful experience. You know, my English was so poor before. Thanks to godness, my English teacher is kind and erudite. He offers me great help. So, I have made improvement...yes, I have.

T- How much time approximately do you devote to English learning every day?

D- We have three English classes every week and each class lasts two hours. I seldom learn English after class except finishing my homework of English. However, as we

all know, there are usually not much homework for college. I know I need to spend more time in English learning and I will do it in future.

T- What is the content of your current English learning?

D- The textbook is 'College English' (Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press). It is still about listening, speaking, reading and writing. But it is a bit different from the textbooks in senior high school. We are asked to pay more attention to practical use of English such as listening and speaking rather than grammar knowledge.

T- Is it difficult or easy for you?

D- Not very difficult. It seems more interesting than the textbooks in senior high school. And my teacher often teaches us English related to engineering which is very helpful for our major. Since it seems to be helpful to my future work, I need to try my best to learn it.

T- Besides the textbook, do you have any other material to learn English?

D- Let me think. Some of my classmates attended English club to practice their English, but I don't have much time to do so. I usually find some teaching material from the internet. At first, it surprised me that there were plenty of teaching material on the internet. I never knew it before I went to college. Three of my roommates are from urban regions so they have access to getting teaching material from internet. They shared these materials with me and taught me how to find useful resource from the internet, which was amazing. You know, compared with them, I am just like a bumpkin. It is so lucky I met such kind new nice friends in college which broaden my horizon.

LF2F_D_JOB_20131201

T- Are you still sorry about your pilot dream?

D- Of course. It was a big blow for me. You know, I almost reached my dream. It was so close that I felt I almost caught it. But I fell down, from heaven to hell. At that moment, I even thought there would be no color for my rest life. Even now, I regret not devoting myself to English. During many nights, when I can't sleep, I will think

about it. If only I had worked hard on English! If only.....But there is no “if” in the world. Ah...

...

D-The English I learned now is different from the one in secondary school. It is mainly about my profession, such as about machines, engines or maintenance. It is a bit difficult for me, but I will do my best because English is necessary if I want to be the chief engineer. Do you know how much the salary is? Aha, the yearly salary is up to one million yuan (approximately 200,000 euros). Oh, how amazing it is! (His eyes are shining while talking.)

T- What are the requirement of being a chief engineer?

D- Oh, there are so many requirements. There are many grades of engineer, and the top one is chief engineer. It is related to one’s working experience, professional knowledge etc. What’s more, I must pass a series of tests. Of course, your English must be good enough, because many aircraft accessories are imported from abroad so the instructions are all in English.

T- How long will it take to be a chief engineer?

D- More than ten years, at least. It is a long and tough path. But once I am successful, all my problems, for instant, my parents, my brother and everything related to money, will be solved... Money seems to be the most lovely thing in the world for me. He he (laughs)...

T- So long as you work hard, you would be successful one day.

D- I hope so. Anyway, it is the Long March, both for me and for my family.

LF2F_D_FAM_20131201

T-You work very hard. Does this have any relation to your family?

D-Yes, you know the situation of my family. I have to bear the duty of looking after my parents and my younger brother. I have no choice but to study hard in order to go to a good university and find a good job to improve the situation of my family.

T- Do you still mind others mentioning your family situation?

D- Hmm... not so much...(pause). You know, I have grown up. It is not my fault...and it is not my parents' fault. Nobody can choose their family. And... they love me. My parents do love me. That's enough.....Do you know, most of my classmates know about my mum's disability but nobody laughs at me, at least in front of me. They are college students and they are not childish. My teacher always tells us: Even a hero might have humble beginning.

T- You have grown up.

D- I have experienced a lot these years, both painful and joyful. These helps me to realize how difficult my parents had been. I am an adult now, it is high time to be mature enough to understand my parents and help them to bear the burden of my family. I did several part time jobs in my spare time.

T- What kind of part time job?

D- Courier. As we all know, the online shopping is very popular so there is a huge requirement for the couriers. I bought a second-hand motorbike and delivered the packages nearby my college.

T- Is the salary considerable?

D- It depends. Since I am only the part time courier and the income is not very considerable. However, it helps me to reduce the financial burden of my family.

T- Does it impede your study since you have to spent much time on it?

D- I can't say it doesn't impede my study at all. But I need to do it. In fact, it impedes to find a girlfriend. He he...(laughs). I have been very busy and don't have enough time to find a girlfriend. How horrible! He he...(laughs)

T- Are there any special relatives or family members who affected your English learning?

D- Hmm... It seems not. Almost all of my relatives are peasants and they knew nothing about English. Due to the situation of my family, it was frequent to borrow money from the relatives so some of them are not willing to have close relationship with us... Of course, I was sad of this and complained them. However, I could understand them currently because their situation was not good enough neither.

| The record of Ding's online interview | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------|------------|---------|
| code | name | type | date | duration | place |
| LOC_D_20130411 | Ding | online chatting | 11/04/2013 | 47 minutes | college |
| LOC_D_20130511 | Ding | online chatting | 11/05/2013 | 38 minutes | college |
| LOC_D_20130618 | Ding | online chatting | 18/06/2013 | 51 minutes | college |
| LOC_D_20130816 | Ding | online chatting | 16/08/2013 | 32 minutes | college |
| LOC_D_20140921 | Ding | online chatting | 21/09/2014 | 35 minutes | college |
| LOC_D_20150317 | Ding | online chatting | 17/03/2015 | 45 minutes | home |

LOC_D_20130411

T- How is your college life?

D- Not bad. Er...er... I've got a ... a girlfriend. So...so it's good. Ha ha...(laughs)

T- Congratulations! Eventually!

D- She is a very lovely and optimistic girl and helps me a lot. I have believed that sentence 'When the God close the door, he will open a window.'

...

D- My current English teacher is amazing! Of course, you are amazing, too. I even feel that I met a foreigner! Do you know what I mean? I mean his English is as good as native speaker! Dear sister, I think he is a bit better than you. How...how...(laugh loudly) Don't mind, just kidding. He had studied in Australia. Hmm...he helps me a lot.

...

T- Is there any person who has an effect on your English learning currently?

D- I think it is my girlfriend. Her major was Business English so she could help me in English learning a lot.

T- How?

D- We always studied together in library and we have set a common goal that both of us need to pass CET-4 this term. I found it was much more interesting and effective

than I learned English alone. She encouraged me attend some activities such as English Corner and so on, which helped me improve my English.

T- That sounds great.

D- I am very thankful to her. In my opinion, she not only helps my English learning, but also improve my whole life. I had told my unhappy childhood life and she conformed and encouraged me instead of looking down upon me. She is preparing a present for my mother for the coming Mother's Day even if she never met my mother. I have decided to bring her home in this summer vocation.

...

D- Sometimes I felt I was a lucky dog because I had had several sincerely friends and a perfect girlfriend since I went to college.

LOC_D_20130511

T- What is your attitude to English when you first learned it?

D- I didn't like English at all. As you know, my English was not good enough during the first and second year when you were my English teacher... Although you often encouraged me and were strict with me...all I thought then was English was not so important and it was enough that I had an average level of English. It is always said "Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry are the strongest powers to the world." Haw...haw...(laughs embarrassedly). It is not my fault, because I was misled by others. So in essence, I am the victim. He he...(laughs).

T- So you are very good at Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry.

D- Not bad.

T- Compared with the subjects above, what is the main reason that you didn't like English?

D- Hmm... It is hard to explain clearly. How to say? I think the main reason was English was very boring. All we can do was rewriting, reciting and remembering. I was asked to write the alphabet for more than fifty times, again and again. It almost made me crazy. During the process, I felt myself was a machine and couldn't gain any

sense of achievement. The science subjects are so different. When I did the practice and worked out a problem, the feeling was so amazing. It offered me a huge sense of success.

T- Do you still hold such kind of belief now?

D- Of course not. You know my painful experience. Whenever I thought about it, I still have a so strong painful feeling that I almost couldn't breath.

T- Are you so painful even now?

D- It is a bit better than then. But I still feel terrible.

LOC_D_20130618

T- Would you like to talk about your family?

D- Hum.....(a long time silence) Ah.....(sighing). Ok, my mother is disabled and there is something wrong with her leg. And my father is too weak to do any manual labor. I have a younger brother.

T- It seems you seldom to talk about your family.

D- I believe you can understand me. When I was young, my peers always laughed at me. They imitated the strange step of my mother and called me "little cripple". I hated this nickname and fought with them so it was common that I often bore a variety of wounds when I was a child..... (His eyes turn red and he tries his best to hold back his tears.)

T- I am sorry.

D- No. There is no need to say sorry. Now I understand it was their fault to look down upon my mother's disability. Unfortunately, I was sensitive and immature at that time. The sky in my childhood seemed always gray. I was the one who was forgotten by the sun. I felt shame of my mother's disability. For millions of time, I complained the god 'why does you make me born in a such family?' 'why are people around me happier than me?' I didn't have enough money to buy toys and clothes. Sometimes I saw my mother on street and I would like to run away. I didn't want others know the situation of my family. So I never asked my friend to visit my house. After I graduated from

secondary school, the main reason why I chose Bright Middle School was that it was not near to my hometown and there were few people knew the situation of my family.

D- You know what? My mother never attended parents meeting.

T- Was that her own will?

D- Ah.....It was me. I refused to let her attend parents meeting. I didn't want others to know my family's situation.

T- What was your mother's opinion about that?

D- I don't know..... Maybe, she was a little sad.....Yes, she was sad. I also feel terrible and am sorry for what I did to her. But.....I have no other option (while talking, he lowers his head to avoid looking at me and keeps rubbing his hands). I was a bad guy, right?

LOC_D_20130816

T- Since you mentioned that your childhood was not happy. Did you have any plan or dream to change your life than?

D- Of course I had. Since I was very young, I have realized that there was no other access to changing my fate except going to university. My parents had no money as well as necessary *guanxi* to offer me a good life. I could only depend on myself.

D- When I was very young, I swore to study hard and go to a good university. When I graduate, I could find a good job to earn money to take care of my family. For me, I don't have powerful relatives or friends to help us and we lack money. This is the only way and I have no choice. One day I will make the people who always laughed at me envy me and regret looking down upon me! I will! Believe me!

T- Yes. I believe you will.

D- Are you serious or just you want to conform me?

T- I believe anyone can be successful so long as he/she makes right decision and works hard.

D- Maybe I am so sensitive. But you are not me, you can not understand my feeling totally. When I was nine years old, my father was ill seriously. So my mother needed

to borrow money to send my father to the hospital. But most of my relatives refused to lend money to us. I hated them.

T- Maybe it was because they didn't have money neither.

D- I knew they also were peasants and didn't have much money. But the main reason was that they were afraid that we couldn't return the money. If my father... couldn't recover, it would take a long time to pay them back. I knew this. Nevertheless, we were relatives and we shared the same blood. Why did they refuse to offer us a hand at such tough time? Since then, I had made decision that I would work hard and have it made. I will let the people who look down upon us regret.

LOC_D_20140921

T- What are you busy with since it has been a long time that I heard from you.

D- I am busy with preparing the practice work. I will work as a trainee in Xi'an Airport next week.

T- What is your specific job?

D- It is said that we will work as on aircraft maintenance. I am very excited and I have been given a uniform. I am just horrible handsome when I am in this uniform (He tries the uniform and show it to me by video).

...

T- Is it the beginning of your way to the chief engineer?

D- I think so. Although it is a Long March, I will start the first step. Come on!

T- Will you be busy when you start your trainee life?

D- I think it will be busy. However, it is heard that we have weekends so I can still see my girlfriend every weekend. I don't care other things so long as I can see her from time to time. At first, my teacher asked me whether I wanted to go to Yinchuan Airport. It is heard that it is not as competitive as in Xi'an Airport since there less trainees there, which means I have more opportunities to be employed by Yinchuan Airport. After thinking for several days, I refused. Yinchuan is very far away from Xi'an so I can't see my girlfriend frequently.

T- Does she begin to practice, too?

D- Yes. She will work in a company as a trainee next month in Xi'an. So it is very easy for us to get union.

LOC_D_20150317

D- I almost wanted to quit.

T- Why?

D- I was so tired and upset. It seemed far away from my dream job. All that I did had nothing to do with engineering, only a maintenance personnel, nothing!

T- What happened?

D- I was asked to do the toughest tasks, for example, conveying the heavy equipment and accessories, cleaning them. None of it needed any technique at all. What's more, as a beginner, my salary was too poor to support myself, let alone my family.

T- It was just a beginning. You always said once you become a chief engineer, everything will be OK.

D- Do not mention chief engineer any more, please. I know it is a dream job, but I don't have time to wait. It is too far to reach. For me, it looks like the moon in the water and the flower in the mirror.....What I have done is in vain.....I am stressed and I need money..... I intend to persist one more year. After all, working on planes is my dream job even though I can't be a pilot. I can't give it up easily. If the situation doesn't change within a year, I will quit this job and to take a job in finance because I have heard that that is a kind of job where you can earn money quickly.

.....

T- Do you think learning English is a kind of waste? Because it hasn't offered any help in your work until now.

D- Somewhat. Maybe in the future, I can use it. Changes can happen any time and everywhere.

T- Will you continue investing in English?

D- Hum... It is hard to say. I don't want to give English up but I am afraid I don't

have time to invest in it. I believe mastering a foreign language is a good thing and it is very probable that in the future it would help me. Maybe English would offer me a job to support my family, who knows?

Interviewer: Luyan Teng (T)

Interviewee: Cherry (C)

Date of interview: December 05th, 2013 Time: 17:30-19:42

| The record of Cherry's face to face interview | | | | |
|---|--------|------------------------|--|-------------|
| code | who | type | key words | time |
| LF2F_C_FAM_20131205 | Cherry | face to face interview | her parents and the influence to her English learning | 17:30-17:56 |
| LF2F_C_CEL_20131205 | Cherry | face to face interview | the current situation of her English learning | 18:00-18:20 |
| LF2F_C_HOB_20131205 | Cherry | face to face interview | her hobbies, especially the hobbies related to English learning | 18:25-18:56 |
| LF2F_C_IFEL_20131205 | Cherry | face to face interview | the influencing factors in her English learning, including the teacher, school and educational | 19:00-19:40 |
| | | | | |

LF2F_C_FAM_20131205

T- How have been you these days?

C- Good. Ha ha...(laughs)

T- You look so happy and excited.

C- Is it very obvious? Ha ha...(laughs). My parents will return to see me in the end of this month. They have New Year's holiday. And they will come back in less than one month.

T- You have mentioned that you had a good relationship with your parents.

C- Very good. My parents treated me like a friend. They always played games with me. And I loved to share everything with them.

T- Did you talk in English with your parents?

C- Frequently. My parents' English is OK, but their oral English is poor, so sometimes my father asked me to correct his pronunciation. Ha ha...(laughs) . It's amazing, right? And they supervised my studies, my mother liked to check my homework.

T- Can they help you in your English learning?

C- Not so much. But they always encouraged me to practice more. Whenever we met a foreigner, they would encourage me to talk with the foreigner. And I found that I could hold simple communication with foreigners. One time, a foreigner told me my pronunciation was very good. It is amazing, right?

T- Since you live with your grandparents now, what's the relationship with your grandparents?

C- Er...they take good care of me. But it is different to the relationship with my parents. It is just...different. They treat me well, but I still miss my parents.

T- Do your grandparents supervise your English learning?

C- No. They care about whether I am hungry, whether I am thirsty, whether I am cold...but they can't discuss my English learning with me. They don't know English at all.

T- Do you think this influences your English learning?

C- Yes, a little. When I have difficulty in English, I only can turn to my teachers or my friends. But when I am at home, it is not convenient to look for help from them. So I spend less time on English than before.

T- You have talked that your parents supervise your study by telephone.

C- Yes, they call me every day, especially my father.

T- It seems that your parents paid a lot of attention to your development.

C- Yes...They have even sent me to private instruction in Shanghai run by Shanghai Jiao Tong University (a top 5 university in China) during the holidays...My father works at education, and I think it helps him to realize the importance of education. My parents will buy many English reference books for me. For example, some books about writing, reading.

T- Did your parents discuss your English learning with other people?

C- Yes. When they had a party with their friends, and their children's study was the main topic.

T- What did they say about your English?

C- At the very beginning, they always said "Just so-so." But recently they would say

“It is OK.”

T- What’s your feeling about this?

C- A little proud. It means I have made progress.

T- What do you think made them change their comment?

C- Maybe because my English has improved. After I transferred to Bright Secondary School, it is frequently that I can get the number one in the examination. In fact, I think the reason is that my classmates learn English later than me. So I have to work hard to avoid being caught up with by them.

T- In your opinion, what made your English become better?

C- You know, I had studied English before, so my teacher appointed me to be the English delegate in my class. In that case, I had to set an example for my classmates. If my English was not good enough, my classmates would think that I am not competent for this position. That would be so shameful. That’s why I devoted so much time to English.

LF2F_C_CEL_20131205

T- Did any particular people influence your learning of English?

C- Yes. I have an uncle who has been settled in the USA for many years now. Whenever he returned to China to visit, sometimes he would like to communicate with me in English to check my level of English. His oral English is very good. He is the one who introduced me to the interesting customs in America. I have a plan to go to an American university. Besides my uncle, I think my friends have an effect on my English learning. We helped each other in English learning. We did our homework together and discussed it. When we talked about our little girls’ secrets, we always spoke in English, especially in front of our parents so that nobody would discover our secrets and we could protect our privacy.

T- That sounds great. Do you attend extra English training class after school now?

C- I ever attended, which was organized by current English teacher, Miss Yao. But now I have quitted.

T- Why?

C- The instruction is different from the one in Chengdu. You know, in Chengdu, there are a lot of interesting activities in the training class. The teacher taught me to English songs and organize games. It improves my interesting of learning English. However, Miss Yao always let us do some practice and after we complete the practice she explains the practice. It is so boring so I gave it up eventually.

LF2F_C_HOB_20131205

T- What would you like to do after class?

C- Doing my homework, reading some books and watching TV play.

T- What kind of TV play do you like?

C- Celebrity drama is my favorite. But my father prefers English plays, especially English original movies. Every time I ask him to watch the dubbed version, he would refuse. He always said only the original one can show the authentic movies. So, I had to follow him. But for me it was hard to catch the words and I had to turn to the Chinese subtitle. I was confused that my father's English was not good, but when he appreciated movies, it seemed that he could understand it well. In fact, sometimes I could catch several words or sentences and it was great. Sometimes I could even learn some new words. After watching English original movies, I found my pronunciation became better. And it improved my listening.

T- That is great. Do you think whether it would help your understanding the English culture or not?

C- A little. I seldom think about it. Once, I watched English programs. They are just for kids. There is a green toy teaching audience to speak English. It helps me on my pronunciation. But I don't have many opportunities to watch it because of time arrangement.

T- It is a pity. Have you read any English books?

C- I have some books about English learning. They are about how to memorize new words and some structures of sentences. I think they are useful because they

summarize the knowledge which can help me to improve my grade in the examination.

T- Besides these books, have you ever read English literatures?

C- No. It is very hard for me to read English literatures. But I have read Chinese edition. For example, The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe, How the Steel Was Tempered, and The Records about Insects, etc. My mother has bought some stories books which are both in English and Chinese for me. The English is so simple that I can understand the stories totally.

T- Did you enjoy reading educational books?

C- Educational book? I have a book called "Teach you how to be a good girl". I am not sure whether it belongs to educational book.

T- Do you think it is helpful?

C- Yes. It teaches me that I should be graceful and gentle. It is a gift from my father.

T- Do you surf internet in your spare time?

C- Not frequently. My grandparents control me seriously. I am only allowed to surf internet on weekends.

T- What do you often do when you surf internet?

C- Chatting with my friends, playing games and watching plays or movies.

T- Have you ever improved your English by computer?

C- Yes. I have learned phonetic symbols by computer. I follow the computer to correct my pronunciation. It helps me a lot because phonetic symbols are very important for me to memorize vocabulary.

T- Have you ever attended some cultural activities? For example , visit some museums, galleries.....

C- I seldom go to this kind of places. I only have ever been to a museum about the earthquake in Bailu town one year ago. I just appreciate the new views after the earthquake.

LF2F_C_IFEL_20131205

T- Do you think the circumstance of English learning is good?

C-Yes. Most of students treat English seriously. Miss Yao sometimes will organize some activities to improve our interesting. My favorite activity is role play. It makes the class not so boring. Unfortunately, she seldom organized such activities. She spends most time to explain the vocabulary, grammar and something like that to us.

T- What kind of role do you think English teacher plays?

C- I think English teacher is very important. Besides the guiding role, the teacher will supplement some knowledge which is not mentioned in the text book but will appear in the exam.

T- Do you have a good relationship with your English teacher?

C- Hmm, how to say, not bad. She does help me a lot. For example, she suggests I write the diary in English to improve my writing. In my diary, I mentioned many problems which bothered me. For example, I broke down with my friends; I missed my parents. She would give me advice. But I don't like her so much. Her class is a kind of boring, and... Maybe, as a student, I shouldn't judge her clothing. But I have to say, she is out-fashion and many of my classmates think so.

T: Do you think English acquisition is helpful when you construct your relation? Did it help you to get a good reputation?

C: Yes. I have met a girl who I didn't know. But she knows me. She told me that it was said my English was perfect so she wanted to make friends with me. It is surprising! And almost everybody knows the number one in our grade. But I consider that I would like to make friends with someone who can share same interests with me not the one whose grade is good.

T: Do you think your school and local community pay much attention to students' English learning?

C: I don't know.

T: Did your school make any rules to improve your English learning? If it does, do you think it is helpful?

C: No.

T: Do you want the rules and what kind of rules do you hope?

C: Yes. I hope our school can give the students a huge board to show our feelings, of course in English. We can exchange the board and there can be a competition between classes about the translation. In that case, we can share our feelings meanwhile our English can be improved.

T: How did you feel about the quality of public English education at schools you attended?

C: Not good. It depends on. Some English teachers do a good job. But more English teachers do not. They don't care about us and just talk and talk in class without paying attention to our reflection.

| The record of Cherry's online interview | | | | | |
|---|--------|-----------------|------------|------------|-------|
| code | name | type | date | duration | place |
| LOC_C_20130606 | Cherry | online chatting | 06/06/2013 | 46 minutes | home |
| LOC_C_20130629 | Cherry | online chatting | 29/06/2013 | 33 minutes | home |
| LOC_C_20130730 | Cherry | online chatting | 30/07/2013 | 38 minutes | home |
| LOC_C_20130916 | Cherry | online chatting | 16/09/2013 | 41 minutes | home |
| LOC_C_20131011 | Cherry | online chatting | 11/10/2013 | 35 minutes | home |
| LOC_C_20151009 | Cherry | online chatting | 09/10/2015 | 39 minutes | home |

LOC_C_20130606

T- Let's discuss something about your English learning. Just like chatting, so don't be nervous.

C- OK.

T- When did you start your English learning?

C- I started my English learning when I was in third grade in primary school. At that time, I lived with my parents in Chengdu city (the capital of Sichuan Province).

T- What did you learn in Chengdu?

C- It is almost the same to what we learnt in the first term in Bright Secondary School (the researcher was previously employed as a teacher in this school). I learnt alphabet, words and simple sentences.

T- How was your learning at that time?

C- Not good and not bad. As normal. My parents described my English learning to their friends by the words "Just so so." I don't know why the grownups always like to ask children's study situation. Every time my relatives meet me, they would like to ask such kind of question, "What is the situation of your study recently?", "How much scores did you get in the latest examination?" and "what's your rank of the final exam?" Always! They are so annoying.

LOC_C_20130629

C- I transferred to Bright Secondary School (the research-setting school, lie in a small town in Sichuan Province, which lies in the southwest of China) when I was 13 years-old and lived with my grandparents.

T- Why do you transfer to Bright Secondary School?

C- Because my parents transferred to a remote city in Gansu Province. You know, Gansu is very remote and the local educational station is not good, so my parents were afraid that it would impede my study. Finally they decided to send me to this town and study in Bright Secondary School. It was my father's hometown. They believed although this was only a small town, but the educational level here was much better than the small city in Gansu Province.

T- Who are taking care of you now?

C- My grandparents.

T- How often can you see your parents?

C- Approximately once a month.

T- It is quite frequent. I know many students can only meet their parents once a year.

C- It is true. One of my friends can meet her parents once two years. Her parents want to save money so they only come back once two years. She is so pitiable. Fortunately, my parents are different, because their work are not so busy so they can come back frequently. And every holiday they will pick me up to Gansu to stay with them. Sometimes my parents try their best to find spare time to travel with me.

LOC_C_20130730

T- You have talked about that you learned English much earlier than your classmates.

C- Yes, and I guess it establishes a firm foundation for me when I transferred to Bright Secondary School.

T- Do you think that your English foundation helps you in your English learning now?

C- Certainly. I am familiar with I am learning now so I perform a little better than my peers. Ha...(laughs). And I was appointed to be the English delegate in my class.

That makes me feel good.

T- Ha ha...(laughs)

C- Miss Teng, are you laughing at me?

T- No,no,no. Don't misunderstand. I just think you are lovely and frank.

C- Being appointed as English delegate, I feel proud about it and bear pressure at the same time. I must be better than others in English learning. It gives me more....hmm....how to say?

T- Motivation.

C- Yes. It gives me more motivation to move forward.

LOC_C_20130916

T- What benefits do you expect from learning English?

C- A lot.

T- For example?

C- At least, when I travel in foreign countries, I will get lost.

T- Ha ha...(laughs). That is true. Do you like travelling?

C- Yes, I love travelling so much. I think it is so cool. I have always wanted to go to Paris.

T- But the people in Paris speak French.

C- I know it. I know in Paris people speak French but I have heard that I can communicate with people in English in Paris. At least, some people can understand me. Anyway, it is much better than (I communicate with people) in Chinese, right?

T- I think so.

C- I was even told that I could be understood in many countries if I speak English. When you are in Spain, what language do you communicate with others?

T- Most of time in English, and sometimes in Spanish since my Spanish is so poor.

C- Look! You can communicate with others in Spain! English is useful.

LOC_C_20131011

T- How much time did you devote to your English learning?

C- Much time. Because I like English and there is always much homework to do so I devote much time to it.

T- Can you explain in detail?

C- At least two hours every day besides the English class in school. For example, every morning I would read English for at least half an hour. Sometimes I read new words, sometimes the text, and sometimes English little stories. The stories are from a magazine called “Literature Lover” which is recommended by my cousin. There are many interesting English stories in this magazine. I love them. In summary, I read the words and texts for an hour in the morning and memorized the new words in the afternoon. Before I went to bed, I felt like reading some interesting English stories.

T- That’s a lot of work.

C- Yes, but my parents asked me to do so.

T- You said now you live with your grandparents rather than your parents.

C- Yes, but my parents supervised me to do so through telephone. They called me every day and asked my situation.

T- About your study?

C- Mainly about study. And sometimes about other issues.

T- They must miss you so much.

C- I know and I miss them, too. But sometimes their supervision makes me feel stressful.

LOC_C_20151009

T- How is your senior high school life?

C- So nervous and stressful. We can only have one-day rest every two weeks! They must be crazy! We are only in Grade one!

T- It seems normal.

C- I know but I am still tired. As you know, the school only focuses on the students’ marks in the examination. So the teacher keep asking us to study and study. It seems

the students are only the machine of study! You know what? we never have any extra-curricular activities. In the morning, before breakfast, we have two classes to read English or Chinese. My teacher always asked us to read loudly but every morning I felt so hungry that I don't have energy to read. After breakfast, there are as many as five class waiting for us. Oh, my god! After lunch, we only have one hour to rest. In the afternoon, there are five classes again! It is not the end. After supper, we still have three classes to review. Every teacher gives us mountainous homework to do. If we can complete the homework, we will be punished. But the time is so limited. It is impossible to finish all the homework. It is no wonder said the time in senior high school is the most painful time in one's life. Oh, god, who can save me.

T- You have to pass through such period.

C- You are right. I have no choice. It seems very competitive in my class. Most of my classmates study like crazy while complaining, which is a great pressure for me. It is so luck for me that I can attend *gaokao* in Gansu.

T- In Gansu Province, the admission score line for university is much lower than in Sichuan Province.

C- Yes, that is why my father transfer my *houkou* to Gansu Province. Thank my dad and my mom. I am so grateful to them.

Focus Group Discussion

Time: 16th December, 2013

Researcher: Luyan Teng (T)

Participants: Cherry (C)

Wang (W)

Eason (E)

Ding (D)

Lily (L)

Serena (S)

| The record of focus group discussion | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--|------------------------------|---|-------------|
| code | who | type | key words | time |
| FGD_20131216_CEL | Cherry Wang Eason Ding Lily Serena | focus group discussion | the current situation of their English learning: their problems, hopes and something related. | 18:00-18:36 |
| FGD_20131216_PEL | Cherry Wang Eason Ding Lily Serena | focus group discussion | their purpose of English learning: From the beginning to now. follow the track and find the reasons of change | 18:42-19:27 |
| FGD_20131216_IFEL | Cherry Wang Eason Ding Lily Serena | focus group discussion | the factors which effect their English learning, mainly about people around | 19:45-20:36 |
| | | | | |

FGD_20131216_CEL

T- What are the main problems in your current English learning?

W- It is so difficult. There are so many words to remember and I am always confused by the grammar. It makes me fall into a complete daze.

E- Yes, I agree with you. What's more, I hate my English teacher.

T- Why?

E- She always force us to do so much homework. If we don't finish, we are done.

W- She is partial. She only like the students who can get high scores in examinations. Even those students did something wrong, she would not punish them. But when 'bad' students did something wrong, aoho (a kind of sigh), y-o-u w-i-l-l b-e d-i-e.

D- Are you kidding me? All teachers only like 'good' students, not only your English teacher. You are so naïve, young man!

Others- Ha ha (laughs). That is true. You are right.

W- Not only teachers, almost all adults like 'good' students. Every time, yes, every time, when I met my relatives, they would ask my scores and my positions in the rank list. If my scores are high, they would praise me. Such as "What a good boy you are" and "Amazing". But once they found

my scores were not high as they expected, they would keep saying "Study hard. Don't

be lazy.” They know what? They know nothing! I am not lazy at all. The results of examination can be influenced by many factors. How could they know it was because of my laziness? In fact, I am tired to death!

Others- Yes...(all totally agree)

L- Me, too. Now I am even afraid of holidays. I always found some excuses to keep them away.

C- (They are) so annoying.

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T- What are your opinion of current English class?

E- Boring to death.

W- Reading vocabulary, reciting texts and learning grammar. Again and again.

S- We all suffered through such period. Ha ha...(laughs)

C- Will it much better in college?

L- It would be, but only a bit.

W- When I listened to her (his current English teacher) explanations of texts, vocabulary and grammar, I would always want to fall asleep.

C- It sounds likes lullaby.

Others- Ha ha (laughs)

D- It happened to me (slept in class).

C- Once, I asked my English teacher whether we could do some games or organize some activities in class. She refused.

T- Why?

C- She said time was limited. There was no time to do games in class. The most important mission was to finish her teaching tasks. At last, she added “There is no game in examinations.”

Others- Ah...(sigh) Examination, again.

FGD_20131216_PEL

T- Do you think English is useful?

ALL- (nodding) Yeah.

T- (Can you explain) more specifically?

W- For me, I need to learn it well to go to university. If English was not good enough, maybe I could not preferred university.

C- Which university is your favorite university?

W- Sichuan University. My cousin is a student in this university so I have the opportunity to visit the university. It is so huge! I was even lost there. And the scenery was... how to say... just...magnificent! So I hope I could go to this university in future!

E- You are so shortsighted! You need go out of Sichuan Province to view bigger world! I even dream of rushing out of Asia to experience the total different life, Hei hei...(laughs)

W&C- Such a braggadocio!

E- How can a sparrow know the will of a swan? (Chinese is “燕雀安知鸿鹄之志”) Do you know why I learn English? Let me tell you. I want to get married to a foreign hot girl!

Others- Pfft...

E- Really. I am serious. You are all superficial! If I can get married to a foreign girl, I could have mix-blood babies. They must be smart and pretty. You will be envy to me then! Cherry, I heard you plan to go to an overseas university, so you will have the opportunity. Go and catch a handsome guy, just go go go!

C- Pfft... I am not as superficial as you. The purpose of my English learning is go abroad and after I finished my study I would go back to China. I want to live with my parents.

...

T- What is the opinions of the college students?

D- It is good they (the secondary students) have dreams. But sometime the reality is reality and dream is dream (reality and dream are different). I think whether English is useful depends where you are. For example, if you stay in this small town, English is

not useful at all. Who can you communicate with in English? Do you want to speak English with rice in the field?

L- That is true. In order to practice my oral English, I have ever been to Starbucks to look for the English native speakers in Chengdu. Of course, it is impossible to find a Starbucks in this small town.

S- Are there many foreigners in Starbucks of Chengdu?

L- Not so many.

S- So the western regions are not as open as eastern regions. In Hangzhou (The capital city of Zhejiang Province, where her parents work), there are so many foreigners, especially some scenic spots, they are almost occupied with foreigners. So there is no need to go to Starbucks to look for English native speakers.

W- But the place where we live is not determined by ourselves but by our parents. I also want to be born in big cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai... Ah...(sigh). I have never been to Beijing. What a pity!

C- We can go to big cities through our own effort rather than depending on parents.

D- It is not so easy. You are young so you don't know how difficult for the children from rural regions to settle in urban areas.

L- To be honest, I didn't feel much difference before I came to college. Most of my classmates' and friends' family background are similar with mine. However, after I came to college, two of my roommates are from urban areas. Compared with them, I realized there was a huge gap between us not only on study but also on horizon.

T- For example?

L- In terms of study, I have always been feeling that my English was not bad...

S- Don't be too modest. Your English is good.

L- Thank you. He He... (laughs). But compared with their English, my English was too poor to speak, especially their oral English and listening.

C- It is common there are more qualified and better teachers in urban schools.

L- That's right. The children from urban region have a higher starting than us. It is not easy for us to catch up with them.

D- Exactly.

L- In terms of horizon, I found they had more developmental views on many things. I can't express exactly and have a feeling that I am almost a fool in front of them.

W- Who says " God is fair" ? It is a big lie.

...

E- By the way, what is Starbucks?

L- It is a worldwide coffee bar and many foreigners like to drink there.

E- If there is a Starbucks in this town, it will be cool!

W- You mean you will have opportunity to meet hot foreign girls?

Others- Ha ha (laughs)...

D- It is impossible to have a Starbucks here, the coffee in Starbucks is very expensive. I ever ordered a small cup of coffee there, and it costed 35 *yuan* (4.5 euros approximately). OMG, are you kidding me? What's more, it tasted so bitter. I would never go to there again.

W- The XXL cup of coffee in the downstairs shop only costs 6 *yuan* (approximately 0.8 euros).

E- The tastes is so good. It is sweet not bitter at all.

...

L- For me, English is always useful so long as I want to be an English teacher, no matter in big cities or small villages.

E- Why do you want to be a teacher? I think this job is very boring.

L- It is not my decision. It is my parents' decision. They believe teacher is a good job, which can offer me a stable life.

E- Why do young men need a stable life? Young men need to go out and experience different life. That is why we live in the world!

L- You are too young and too simple. We can't only live for ourselves and need to think of parents' feeling. If I reject their suggestions, they will be sad.

E- You girls are always like this. You can't hold your own idea. Ah...

C- Pfft... you boys are always like this. You are too selfish and only care of yourself.

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S- In terms of whether English is useful, the place is important. When I was in Zhejiang Province, I have even earned money through English. Ha ha...(laughs)

D- I love the story of earning money. Tell us.

S- It happened in this summer vacation. And I spent my vacation with my parents in Zhejiang. The factory (which her parents work in) has a project collaborating with an Indian company. And one day the Indian in charge of the project came without notification in advance. So the professional translator wasn't in the factory at that time. So the manager (of the factory) asked me to translate for them. Oh, my god... I was nervous. You know, I seldom communicate with foreigners. I was...so worried. Fortunately, he didn't talk about complex things and he just wanted to see how the project was going. Still the manager (of the factory) was satisfied and paid me two hundred yuan. Ha ha...(laughs).

Others- The manager is a miser! He should have paid you more. (joking)

S- Yes, yes, it is not so much (money). But it is the first time I have earned money through English! I feel so good! Just as I imagined before.

T- How are your parents (about this thing)?

S- Oh, they were exaggerated. They have kept showing off in front of their workfellows almost an entire week! Oooop, so embarrassed.

T- How did they show off?

S- Such as "Finally, my daughter can earn money." "It is worthy her learning English for a lot of years." "Ah, my daughter is different from us."

L- My mother is the same. When I was a temporary English teacher in a private English training center, she always showed off to my relatives. She always said that how capable her daughter was, which made me feel ashamed. And claimed if their children had any problems in English learning, just turned to me without any hesitation. It scared me! My English was not good enough. If I couldn't answer their questions of English learning, it is very likely I lose my face totally!

W- Parents are always like this. Sometimes they praised me to the heaven and

sometimes they scolded me to the hell.

Others- Yes, yes. (nodding)

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FGD_20131216_IFEL

T- Do you think the people around you, for example parents, relatives or friends, have an important effect on your English study?

W- I do think it has a great effect. For example, I felt my mother was ignorant and what she could do was chattering. Whenever I didn't get high score, she would say "Why are you so stupid? Look at XXX (name), she/he is much better than you!" When I want to have a rest or go out with my friends, she would say "It is the reason why your study is bad, or why you fell behind in last examination." She is always like this. She never tried to communicate with me, just chattering and scolding. I need conform when I didn't do well in examinations. I also was sad and felt sorry. Why couldn't understand me? Sometimes I want to escape from home.

T- Did you try to turn to your father?

W- My father is better, sometimes he would help me analyze why I didn't do well in the examination. But he is always very busy. I ever complained about my mother to my father. But it seemed not work. My mother didn't receive much education and was very obstinate.

E- If there were a school to teach parents to be wise, it would be wonderful.

D- Chattering seems to be the common character for all mothers.

S- My aunt is an expectation. I have ever noticed how she communicated with her son. She treated her son as an equal adult even though he was only six years old. Most of time, she would discuss the issues with him rather than order him.

W- What is your aunt job?

S- She is a designer in Singapore.

W- No wonder. Our parents are peasants, what's more, they are traditional Chinese parents. It is impossible that they treat us as equal. My grandma still scolded even hit my mother when she thought she was wrong.

T- The bad relationship effects your learning, right?

W- Of course. I could understand that they couldn't help my study. For example, their English was very poor, so when I had problems on English learning, they couldn't offer any specific help. However, why do they not have realization as Serena's aunt?

D- Our parents didn't receive much education. It is difficult for them to do so.

T- Does your aunt have effects on your English learning, Serena?

S- Yes, she has. She is the good example of my whole family. Her experience sounds like an inspirational story. My aunt did a bad job in *gaokao* since her mathematics was very bad. After she graduated from senior high school, she went to a clothing factory as a worker of production line in Guangdong Province (a province lies in the southwest of China). She liked drawing since she was a child and was very good at drawing. So during her working in the clothing factory, she learned designing in her spare time and several years later she finally became a designer. Of course, she hadn't worked in the clothing factory anymore and found a new job in a costume designing factory based on her good drawing skills and rich experiences in costume making. Since she was in secondary school, English was the best subject for her. Even if she couldn't go to university, she has continued her English learning for those years. So when her company decide to establish a new branch in Singapore, she won the opportunity among many competitors because of her English acquisition. And now she married a Singaporean and leads a very happy life.

Others- Wow...(admiration)

S- However, her story gives me stress, too. My parents always hope I could be as perfect as her. It is difficult for me.

L- Sometimes it seemed a complicated thing that you have such a perfect example around you. On one hand, this example offers you motivation to move forward. On the other hand, if you can't catch up with him/her, you would be upset.

D- I hope I could have such an example around me. In fact, it can be considered as a kind of useful *guanxi*. At least, when I encountered difficulties or confusions, I could turn to him/her to get some suggestions.

W- Me, too. My parents seem not able to offer longsighted suggestions in some vital points.

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