

THE INFLUENCES OF MULTIMODALITY ON INTERNATIONAL  
CHINESE STUDENTS' IDENTITY NEGOTIATION  
WHILE USING L2 LITERACIES SKILLS

by

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## ABSTRACT

This research explored how three newly arrived Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to (re)construct multiple identities. It also examined to what extent multimodality influenced these three ELI students' identity negotiation. Having conducted interviews, observed class interactions, and collected documents, such as WeChat discussion exchanges, this research found that these three ELI students experienced embarrassment in different contexts and had difficulty to claim their identities due to limited English proficiency. However, the use of multiple modes and tools helped them gain access to communities of L2 literacies practices, in which they (re)constructed viable and ideal identities as culture brokers, deep and creative thinkers, information providers, and competent L2 learners and users. This research also suggests that Chinese students' Chinese names and keepsake improved their agency, which empowered them to employ multimodality to participate in different communities of practices to develop identities.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my son Bowen Gao, whose independence, intelligence, and diligence were endless support for my research.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Technological advancement and a semiotic revolution have created an increasingly multimodal world (Harste, 2010; Kress, 2010; Sanders & Albers 2010). The use of multiple modalities, technologies, and multimedia has dramatically changed ways of communication, thinking, and literacies practices, which subsequently required a reform of traditional second language (L2) teaching and learning. Scholars of L2 literacies advocate a need for integration of multimodality (multimodal communication and representation) into L2 literacies curriculum and instruction (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012; Kress, 2003; H. Lee, 2014; L. Lee, 2014; Siegel, 2012). Since communication is multimodal (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), L2 learners select varied modes of image, music, gesture, written text, and oral text to make meaning in order to represent and communicate (Ajayi, 2008, 2009; Lam, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2009a, 2009b; Vinogradova, Linville, & Bickel, 2011). The multiple modes of language learning characterized by interactivity, creativity, dynamicity, heterogeneity, and flexibility in the specific context of burgeoning local diversities, multimedia technologies, and global connectedness warrant critical examination in L2 literacies practices and L2 learners' identity development (Cope & Kalantzis, 2012; Gee, 2012; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Kern, 2000, 2015; Kress, 2000, 2003, 2006, 2010; Lam, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2012, 2013; New London Group, 1996). What kinds of multiple modes are utilized and developed in L2 literacies practices? How do multiple modes function as alternatives for L2 literacies use as well as development? Does multimodality influence L2 identity negotiation? These questions are worth exploring.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this intensive case study was to discover how Chinese international students at the English Language Institute (ELI) at a southeastern university interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices.

### **Research Questions**

In exploring the influences of multimodality on Chinese ELI students' identity negotiation, two overarching questions guided this research. They include

1. How do Chinese ELI students interact with multiple modes and tools to participate in L2 literacies practices and negotiate their identities; and
2. To what extent might multimodality influence Chinese ELI students' identity construction and reconstruction?

### **Rationale for the Study**

The rationale for this study included three parts: the rapid growth of Chinese ELI students at a Southeastern U. S. University, international Chinese students' struggle to participate in L2 literacies practices (Duff, 2002; Liu, 2001, 2002; Miller, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Tsui, 1996), and current research on the relationships of L2 literacies, identity, and multimodality.

### **The Influx of Chinese Students to the ELI Program**

The number of international students has dramatically increased in recent years with Chinese students being the most plentiful (Bartlett & Fischer, 2011; Huang & Brown, 2009; Wang, 2016). There is evidence that the enrollment of international Chinese students has increased by 10.8% in total to more than 304,040 students, and increased by 18 percent at the undergraduate level in 2015(referring to Open Doors 2015 Report Data). There has been a high

concentration of international Chinese students at Western and Eastern universities in the US; however, after 2011, the Southeastern states including Alabama, Kentucky, Arkansas, and Louisiana (Chao, 2013) have attracted a significant population of Chinese undergraduate students as well. This influx of Chinese students to America has happened for numerous reasons, such as universities' need for cultural, linguistic, and ethnic diversity, academic research requirements, and their economic demand. China's growing economy, enormous population, and a pursuit of a quality education have encouraged Chinese parents to send their offspring to study in the United States (Wang, 2016).

Subsequently, the population of international Chinese students at the Southeastern U. S. University in this study has dramatically increased in recent years. The total numbers of Chinese undergraduates currently enrolled by the university where the study was conducted are 2,442 (the information provided by Office of Institutional Research & Assessment at this university); 3% of them are conditionally admitted by this university because of their limited English proficiency. These conditionally enrolled students have to attend the ELI program in order to pass the TOEFL test (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or meet the English requirements set by the ELI before starting their program studies. This group of Chinese ELI students are marked as "cash cows," most of them from the nascent middle class (Stevens, 2012), and/or "TOEFL failures" who lack the necessary knowledge of the target language and culture (Walker, Whelan, & Moore, 2013). To help these Chinese ELI students improve their L2 literacies skills, the ELI at this university has developed pathway programs to facilitate second language socialization and use. Specifically, the ELI offers six levels of intensive English classes, including level 1 (low beginning), level 2 (high beginning), level 3 (low intermediate), level 4 (high intermediate), level 5 (low advanced), and level 6 (high advanced) (<http://www.eli.ua.edu/statichome/program->

design/). On the first day of the first session, the ELI students need to take the Placement Exam. The ELI places these students into different classes based on grades on the exam. Once students pass the level 6 of all classes (speaking and listening, structure, and reading and writing) or the TOEFL test, they can graduate from the ELI and start their program studies.

### **International Chinese Students' Struggle to Participate in L2 Literacies Practices**

Lisa, a Chinese ELI student who was one of the researcher's participants in a pilot study. She reported,

Speaking English is like dancing with shackles. I do not know how to stretch my legs and arms. It is very painful to participate in class discussions because when I speak English, my tongue is tied up. Sometimes I feel stupid and awkward if I do not know the answer related to the target culture. Whenever my teacher asks me questions, I just want to hide or disappear, because I do not understand what she is talking about and do not know how to answer her questions. She might think I am dumb. Even though I know the answers sometimes, I do not want to raise my hand, because I am afraid of making mistakes. If I make mistakes, my classmates would laugh at me. I think I am irrelevant to the class. I feel like there is a mark on my face: 'you are a failure'. I do not want people to know I am an ELI student. I feel like I am inferior to others, especially those Chinese students who already started their undergraduate programs. I just want to escape from my ELI classes because I do not belong to this group. Unfortunately, I have to stay at ELI until I pass the TOEFL test. I am the only child in my family. My parents have high expectations for me. I cannot disappoint them. I have to try very hard to improve my English in order to start my program studies. (Interview with an international Chinese student Lisa enrolled in the ELI programs, June 14, 2014) (The interviewee's name is a pseudonym.)

For Lisa, being an ELI student seems like a stigma. Apparently, it is a struggle for her to use her L2 to interact with her instructor and classmates. She is frustrated by the fact that her inadequate L2 literacies skills restrain the opportunities for participating in class activities, and her words reveal a sense of her marginalized position in that micro society (she thinks she does not belong to that group). Being unable to be a legitimate participant (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in L2 literacies practices becomes the main reason for her struggle to gain membership in the target language community (Gee, 1996, 2012; Lam, 2000). She sees herself as a failure, but she does

not want to be a failure because she shoulders the responsibility to satisfy her parents' expectations. She encounters a dilemma to resist her perceived and positioned identities, but it seems impossible for her to change her struggling situation if she does not invest in class activities.

Lisa's case mirrors some international Chinese students' predicament of L2 literacies practices (Duff, 2002; Lam, 2000, 2009a, 2009b, 2012; Liu, 2001, 2002; Miller, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Tsui, 1996). Scholars have studied international Chinese students' absence of engagement in L2 literacies activities, such as in class or group discussions, presentations, or problem-based learning (Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003; E. Lee, 2008; Liu, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996). For example, Liu (2002) observed classroom communication patterns of three Chinese graduate students at a large Midwestern U.S. University and found that none of them were totally involved in class activities. His participants fell into three categories of classroom communication patterns: "conditional participation, marginal interaction, [and] silent observation" (p. 41), which mainly resulted from their inadequate L2 literacies abilities. Likewise, Tsui's (1996) research on Chinese student silence in English class reveals that students' low English proficiency was the defining factor that caused low levels of participation in L2 literacies practices. Two excerpts below are from English teachers' perceptions of students in Tsui's (1996) study:

[My] students' language proficiency is not good enough to express their ideas clearly in English during group discussion. In fact, the English standard of most of my students is very low.

I think the students' failure to respond to teachers' question was a result less from lack of knowledge but more of the insufficient English proficiency. (p. 148)

Another case in point is Miller's (2000) case study, which showed that international Chinese students enrolled in an intensive English program in a high school in Australia were

quite reticent speakers of English and had limited interactions with English native speakers. They were culturally positioned as others and remained in the same ethnic group of Chinese. Miller pointed out that the low level of oral participation in class activities has segregated and alienated these international Chinese students from the mainstream culture. In addition, they set themselves apart from others because of alienation and discrimination derived from limited L2 literacies skills.

Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft's (2003) study on international Chinese eighth graders in New York City showed that most of Chinese students seldom participated in class discussions. They argued that shyness, fear of making grammatical errors, and uncertainty in speaking in L2 might have resulted in class reticence. Even though shyness could be explained as these students' personality, it also could be a result of social and cultural alienation, unfamiliarity with institutional and academic discourse, lack of knowledge of subject matter, and/ or communicative competence (McCroskey, 1991). Interestingly, none of these international Chinese students considered themselves as English speakers. Inadequate English proficiency restrained them from participating in L2 literacies practices. As a result of non-participation, taciturnity limited their opportunities to socialize for group membership. Are there any ways for international Chinese students to participate in L2 literacies practices in order to gain membership of the target language community? If so, how do the alternatives help these students develop their identity when employing L2 literacies skills?

### **Bridging the Research Gap: Multimodality and Chinese ELI Students' Identity**

Multimodality refers to multimodal communication and representation (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2003, 2010), which specifically means the use of multiple modes to communicate (e.g. music, gestures, still and moving images, and so on) and digital tools. The use

of multimodality has profoundly and unprecedentedly improved L2 learners' literacies development (Ajayi, 2008, 2009; Gee & Hayes, 2011; Jewitt, 2008; Kern, 2006; Lam, 2006, 2009a, 2012; Lambert, 2013; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; H. Lee, 2014; L. Lee, 2014; Lundby, 2009; Nelson, 2006; Rowsell & Pahl, 2007). Since the screen has become a predominant text structure (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2003), L2 learners often combine and recombine existing linguistic, semiotic, and cultural resources to create new meanings by the use of technological tools, such as instant messaging, e-mails, chatting, blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and so forth. For example, Lam (2004) found that an Internet chat room provided two Chinese learners of English with a platform to socialize with others in order to construct and negotiate their ethnic identifications and gain multiple literacies abilities. When these two L2 learners communicated with native speakers in a chat room, they not only exchanged information and co-constructed knowledge, but also continuously shaped and reshaped their multiple identities and built and rebuilt relationships with the social world.

Hampel and Stickler's (2012) research showed that the use of videoconferencing made it possible for English speakers of German to combine different modes to design and redesign meanings to reach the goal of communication and interaction. The online conferencing environment functioned as sites of practices, in which the L2 learners took control of multiple tools to develop their L2 literacies skills and form their multiple identities.

In O'Dowd's research (2003), the participation of Spanish speakers of English in instant messaging practices enabled them to develop their literate repertoire by mobilizing cultural and linguistic resources within and without the communities. The use of e-mail messages helped these learners successfully build intercultural relationships with their partners and improved their communicative competence. Communicating via e-mail also allowed them to better understand

their home cultures through their native partners' feedback. Furthermore, digital storytelling (i.e., short and economical personal narration) improved L2 literacies development as well (Vinogradova, Linville, & Bickel, 2011). In their longitudinal qualitative research study, Vinogradova et al. studied 18 international students at an eastern U. S. university, who drew on digital storytelling to express how they interpreted a target culture, built a relationship with it, and positioned themselves in a new community. These student authors found favorable and multiple ways to represent themselves, which “[gave] voice to their cultural identities through the oral use of their national languages while including on-screen text-visual linguistic representation--addressing imagined English--speaking audiences” (p. 183). Technology and digital tools have provided an alternative rhetorical context for L2 learners to voice their unique perspectives based on their cultural values and personal experiences.

Nelson (2006) argued that the use of synaesthesia of transformation and transduction has the potential to help international Chinese graduate students voice their authorship when they experienced academic writing by utilizing multimedia at UC Berkeley. These learners authored their own documents through drawing on imagery, voice, sound, written text, and other semiotic modes, which held unlimited potential for the voices of those who would not otherwise gain the chance and ability to express meanings in a second language.

In brief, digital tools and multiple modes have increased the amount of communication, encouraged the exchange of ideas, and motivated L2 learners to gain multiple literacies skills and appreciate target cultures as well. However, little research has focused on Chinese international students (conditionally enrolled as undergraduate students) in an ELI setting to explore the influences of multimodality on their identity negotiation.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in the poststructuralist understanding of language and identity (Albright & Luke, 2008; Block, 2006, 2007; Bourdieu, 1977b; Mantero, 2006, 2007; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2001; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Pavlenko, 2001; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Peirce, 1995), L2 literacies (Allen, 2011; Gebhard, 2004; Kern, 2000, 2006; Kern & Schultz, 2005; Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009), multimodality (Kress, 2003), and sociocultural theory (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Duranti, Ochs, & Schieffelin, 2014; Ellis, 1999; Lantolf, 2000, 2002; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Rogoff, 1996, 2003; Voloshinov, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 1998; Wertsch & Toma, 1995). The poststructuralist approach to language focuses on the relationship among language learners' identity negotiation and unequal power relations between interlocutors and specific social contexts.

Language learners face difficulties in accumulating cultural capital to gain access to membership in a community when they socialize with each other in a new language (Kaplan, 2010), because oftentimes they have neither the "right to speech" nor the "power to impose reception" (Bourdieu, 1977b, p. 648). Even though they have the opportunity to speak, they might not be able to or willing to do so. It is common that L2 learners are silenced or silence themselves in a speech community. The L2 learners' identity can be explained as "audibility in a second language" (Block, 2007, p. 41). Audibility refers to both being heard and being accepted by the membership in the target language community of practice. Block (2007) pointed out that "audibility is about developing an identity in an additional language not only in terms of linguistic features, but also dress, expressions, movement, behavior and other forms of semiotic behavior" (p. 42), which is parallel to Kress's (2003) theory of multimodality, a theory informed by social semiotics, which studies how different modes of meaning are interdependent and

intertwined when the meaning designers communicate with others by presenting their understandings and interpretations of the world with which they interact.

In addition to the theories of identity and multimodality, the concept of L2 literacies and sociocultural theory also inform this study. L2 literacies enable L2 learners to fully participate in societies that increasingly demand multiple abilities to interpret multiple texts and contexts in a second language. L2 literacies development occurs in the process of cultural and social interactions, which is in accordance with sociocultural theory. Based on the theories of identity, L2 literacies practices, sociocultural theory, and multimodality, this study aims to understand how Chinese ELI students participate in second language socialization and use it to build a multimodal identity.

### **L2 Literacies Practices Built on Social and Cultural Interaction**

Kern (2000) defines L2 literacies as “the use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts” (p. 16), which involves interpretation, conventions, collaboration, cultural knowledge, problem solving, reflection and self-reflection, and language use. Central to L2 literacies is oral and written communication in a second language. L2 literacies have been redefined as social practices in which L2 learners make sense of multiple texts embedded in intricate sociocultural, political, historical, and technological contexts. The updated definition of L2 literacies accentuates creative, critical, dialectic, and analytical thinking and comprehensive abilities to use multiple modes to interpret and design meanings to participate in culture shaping and reshaping (Gee, 2012; Kern, 2000; Kress, 2003; Lam, 2000; Lankshear & Knoble, 2006). In this sense, L2 literacy should be plural (L2 literacies). In addition, L2 literacies are not just linguistic achievements, but historically, culturally, and socially situated practices, which emphasize its complexity, plurality, and

multiplicity formed by societal and technological forces in the new media era (Gee, 2012; Kern, 2015; Kress, 2003).

Learning takes place in a particular cultural context, which is mediated by language and other implicit and explicit symbol systems (Duff, 2002, 2007; Holliday, 1978; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1999). Second language acquisition and literacies advancement rely heavily on the interaction of individuals. During the social and cultural participation and interaction in the local context, the new relationships between texts and contexts are constructed and reconstructed. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of community of practice resonates with sociocultural theory. Their concept of legitimate peripheral participation as "a descriptor of engagement in social practice that entails learning as an integral constituent" (p. 35) and "a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practices" (p. 29) emphasizes social and cultural interaction. L2 learners shifting from the margin of a domain of L2 literacies practice to the center is "a way of gaining access to sources for understanding through growing involvement" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 37). Based on the understanding of the intertwined relationship among L2 literacies, sociocultural theory, and theory of community of practice, this study aimed to examine how multimodality influenced Chinese ELI students' identity negotiation.

### **L2 Literacies Practices Intertwined with Multimodality**

The spread of globalization and technological changes necessitates a transformation in L2 literacies practice and development. The new challenge requires L2 learners to change the ways they use languages as well as the ways they learn languages. In this sense, L2 literacies development is realized by the use of multimodality (Kress, 2003). Multimodality stresses the importance of communication and representation by drawing on multiple modes, such as written

texts, music, speech, images, gestures, artifacts, and digital tools, which function as different forms of mediation to scaffold L2 learners to gain linguistic and cultural capital. The importance of multimodality in L2 literacies informs the researcher to explore how Chinese ELI students may take advantage of multiple modes and digital tools to facilitate their L2 literacies and attain material and symbolic resources in order to gain legitimate membership of a specific community.

### **L2 Literacies Practices and Identity Negotiation**

In order to develop and negotiate L2 identities, learners are dependent on L2 literacies practice. From a poststructuralist standpoint, identity is dynamic, fluid, and transformative across time and space (Block, 2007; Mantero, 2007; McKay & Wong, 1996; Peirce, 1995; Pennycook, 2001; Weedon, 1987). Specifically, identity is

socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language. Identity work occurs in the company of others—either face-to-face or in an electronically mediated mode—with whom to varying degrees individuals share beliefs, motives, values, activities and practices. (Block, 2007, p. 27)

Hall (1994) has contended that identity is not only about “who we are” or “where we came from,” but also about “what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves” (p.4). It indicates that identity is multilayered. In addition, identity is constructed within discourse that signifies relations of power. L2 learners with limited English proficiency positioned as others (McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2000; Peirce, 1995) tend to experience a critical phase of their life, a period of struggle to approach a balance between self-positioning and positioned identities. At the same time, their relatively stable identities constructed in the discourse of their home language and culture face challenging automatically, which might increase or decrease their desires for recognition, affiliation, and security (Peirce, 1995). In this sense, the construction and reconstruction of identities is fraught

with ambivalence in which L2 learners feel confused and discomforted when they are “unable to read the situation properly and choose between alternative actions” (Bauman, 1991, p. 1).

Drawing on these multiple theories: sociocultural theory, multimodality, L2 literacies, and identity, this research proposes a poststructuralist perspective on language socialization and use as a conceptual framework to study the relation of L2 literacies practice and identity development when utilizing multimodality. The salient overlap of these four substantial theories is that L2 literacies practices are mediated by implicit and explicit symbolic and material tools and modes through which L2 learners exercise control over their thinking, motivation, and action to gain viable and ideal identities. In other words, L2 learners actively and purposefully engage in language socialization and use to enhance self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-development to change the stigmatized and marginalized identities to gain membership of the community of practice by capitalizing on various modes and tools. As agentive and selective participants in social interaction and involvement, L2 learners make efforts to transform power relations in order to move from margins to the center of an L2 learning community. This framework considers identity development as an intricate interplay of social norms, power relations, meaning negotiation, and membership attaining in a globalized, digitized, and multilingual milieu. The hybridity of various theories builds a solid theoretical foundation for this study to examine how multimodality might influence Chinese ELI students’ L2 literacies development in which they construct and reconstruct their multilayered, dynamic, perhaps contradictory, and complex identities. Figure 1 below shows the theoretical framework of this study. In the interaction of the four quadrants, multimodality mediated L2 learners’ language socialization and participation in community of practices in and through which they fashioned viable and ideal identities. The overlap of these four quadrants spoke to L2 learner’s (re)construction of sense of

selves when engaging in community of L2 literacies practices, which in turn facilitated L2 acquisition and socialization.

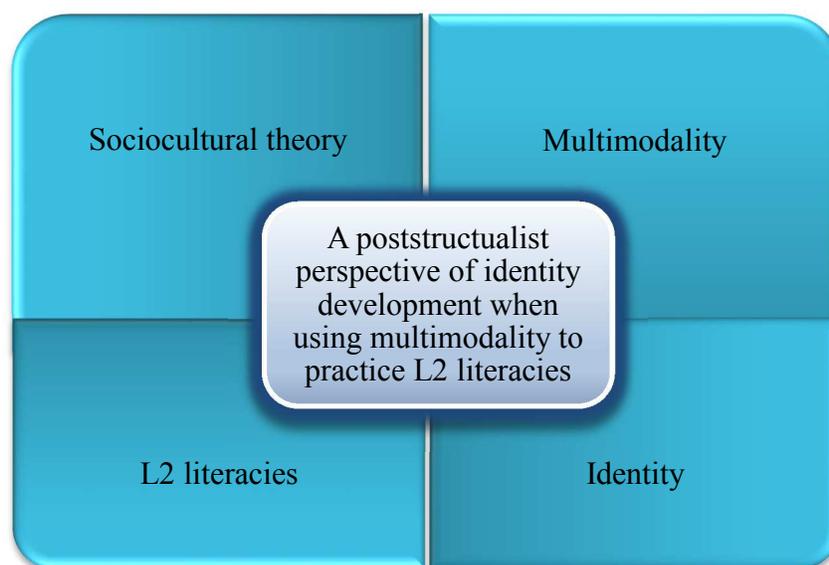


Figure 1. A poststructuralist perspective of identity development

### Definitions of the Key Terms

The purpose of this intensive case study was to discover how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices. Key terms are defined below.

*Affordance*: “Affordance” (Kress, 2003; van Lier, 2004) means potentials and possibilities of a mode or a sign used to make meaning and negotiate meaning. It signals a relationship between a language user and a linguistic expression, which functions as a match between the user and the linguistic expression. Affordance promotes perception and activities by producing meanings in communication and representation. In this research, affordance refers to the functions of ELI intensive programs, ELI learners’ amulets, keepsakes, their smartphones,

and other symbolic and material modes and tools. These ELI students draw on these affordances to design and negotiate meanings when they participate in L2 literacies practices.

*Agency:* “Agency” (Bandura, 2001; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2003; Norton & Toohey, 2011; Peirce, 1995; Weedon, 1987) speaks of Chinese ELI students’ desire and capability to negotiate multiple identities when they use L2 literacies skills. Specifically, agency refers to Chinese ELI students’ awareness of, willingness to, and capability of making an effort to become competent and capable L2 learners and users. This research examines how Chinese ELI students make decisions about adaptation to the target language environment and self-improvement as active and complete social future designers (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) by creating multiple texts in multiple contexts.

*Chinese ELI Students:* The term “Chinese ELI students” (Stevens, 2012) means Chinese international students from mainland China conditionally enrolled by the Southeastern U.S. University. They attend the intensive and extensive English training program offered by the ELI to enhance their basic English language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, and writing. These ELI students are allowed to start their program studies after meeting the necessary English requirements or passing the TOEFL test.

*Design:* The concept of “design” derives from the work of Kalantzis and Cope (2012), and refers both to the product (multimodal texts) and process of meaning making (designing). The product means the structure and function of texts, but the process indicates agency, interest, and creation of L2 learners. Design is the most important and complicated part of meaning making (Albers & Harste, 2007), because it involves selecting, sorting, arranging, outlining, deploying, assembling, and remixing resources (Rowell, 2013; Rowell & Walsh, 2011), in which rich vision, imagination, analysis, synthesis, and innovative and critical thinking are

required. A good text made with multiple modes not only disseminates the designer's messages, but also directs the audience's attention to them.

*Discourse:* In this research "Discourse" means how Chinese ELI students use English to socialize with each other in an identified and identifiable way as members of a particular social group (Lankshear & Knoble, 2006; Weedon, 1987); that is, Discourse is an integration of language socialization and identity (Gee, 1996; Lam, 2000). Discourse is not just about what you say, how you talk, and to whom you talk, but also the context in which you talk, all of which displays who you are and how you interact with others appropriately in a cultural and meaningful social community (Gee, 2012).

*L2 Literacies:* Chinese ELI students make and design meaning in a second language in which interpretation, collaboration, conventions, cultural knowledge, problem solving, reflection and self-reflection, and language use are involved (Kern, 2000). L2 literacies empower L2 learners to interpret the intricate relationships among texts, contexts, and identities of people. L2 literacies also pertain to multiple abilities to mix and remix signs, modes, and symbols available to communicate with native and non-native speakers and represent themselves in multiple, fluid, and dynamic ways (Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knoble, 2003a, 2003b, 2006, 2011).

*Meaning Making:* Meaning making involves meaning makers' interests and needs for communication by selecting a variety of representational resources (Available Designs) to design meaning. Designing is central to meaning making, because it entails meaning designers' agency, interest, cultural backgrounds, history, preferences, motivations, and communicative goals. The use of multiple modes in L2 literacies practices promotes meaning designers to construct and reconstruct multilayered identities and develop multiple skills (Charles & Boyle, 2014;

Kalantzis, & Cope, 2012; Kress, 2003, 2010; Nilsson, 2010; Rowsell, 2014). Meaning making in a second language requires multiple abilities.

*Subjectivity:* According to Weedon (1987), subjectivity means “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself, and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 28). Individuals are active and complete agents who are actively constructed and construct themselves when interacting with others and the society. Therefore, the social relationships are essential for individuals to be situated in diverse, contradictory, and dynamic practices. Subjectivity represents L2 learners’ identities to some degree.

### **Overview of the Chapters**

This research consists of nine chapters. Chapter I presents an introduction, followed by the purpose of the study, research questions, rationale of this study, theoretical framework, and definition of key terms. Chapter II reviews relevant literature, such as the nature of language, sociocultural theory, perspectives on L2 literacies, identity, multimodality, and Chinese ELI students’ L2 literacies development. This chapter provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the relationships among L2 literacies, identity, and multimodality. Chapter III discusses the methodologies used in this research, including case study and personal narratives. Personal narration displays an ability “to verbalize and situate experience as text (both locally and globally) [that] provides a resource for the display of self and identity” (Schiffrin, 1996, p.167). This chapter addresses the research site, participants, the researcher’s reflexivity, data collection and analysis, and trustworthiness in detail. Chapters IV-VIII analyze the findings from the data and connects the emerged themes to the existing literature. Specifically, these chapters speak to the ways in which Chinese ELI students developed their L2 literacies skills. Chapters

IV-VIII also present the findings about how multimodality influenced international Chinese ELI students' identity negotiation. Chapter IX discusses the results of data analysis, in terms of Chinese ELI students' L2 literacies development and identity shaping and reshaping, and meaning making and designing. In addition, it discusses pedagogical implications. This chapter summarizes the findings, limitations, and implications for future research.

CHAPTER II:  
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Overview**

Chapter II reviews relevant literature on identity, L2 literacies, and multimodality. It includes five sections: language and identity negotiation, sociocultural theory and language socialization, research on multimodality and identity development, Chinese ESL (English as a Second Language) students' use of multimodality to negotiate identities, and a brief review on methodology. The first section maps out a general picture of identity and language, in which the researcher discusses the concepts of discourse, subjectivity, investment, audibility, and literacies. This section lays a foundation for understanding how Chinese ELI students develop their identities through language learning, socialization, and use. The second section discusses the paradigms of language learning and L2 literacies, and highlights the nature of language learning and L2 literacies development, participation, interaction, and negotiation based on sociocultural theory and theory of communities of practices. The third section focuses on the main findings of multimodality and identity negotiation, and illustrates the influences of multimodality on L2 learners' identity development. This section explores and explains the function of multiple modes in language learning and literacies competence, and provides insights into how Chinese ELI students might use multimodality as alternatives to gain access to power, resources, and other symbolic capital. Section four discusses Chinese ESL students' identity negotiation in multiple contexts, and reveals Chinese ESL student's learning struggles and dilemmas due to their inadequate English proficiency and unwillingness to participate in classroom activities and

discussions. This section also addresses Chinese ESL students' participation in online communities of practice, which provides a rationale for this research. Section five briefly reviews methodology, including research on data collection and analysis as well as translating interview transcripts.

## **Language and Identity Negotiation**

### **Identity, Language, and Power**

A great number of researchers have studied the relationship between language and identity. For example, Heller (1987) observed that negotiation of a sense of self is realized by and through language, in which language learners gain or deny access to symbolic resources and social networks that provide them with opportunities for speech. In the same vein, Weedon (1987) argued that

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 constructed. (p. 21)

Following Weedon's understanding of relationship between language and identity, Norton (2000) holds that language is "constitutive of and constituted by a language learner's identity" (p. 5), which echoes Granger's (2004) claim that language is a medium and site of identity negotiation and construction. Language learning involves transforming self-positionings and positionings by others and identity shaping and membership gaining (Guiora, Beit-Hallahmi, Brannon, Dull, & Scovel, 1972; Pavlenko, 2001; Wenger, 1999). That is, identity is inextricably tied with language, because identity is confirmed and shaped through the communicative process (Brown, 1973).

The construct of identity can be dated back to Hegel (as cited in Block, 2007), who theorized self-consciousness as essential for understanding the development of individual

independence, liberty, and rights. Self-consciousness is part of identity. Butler (2004) thinks that identity and subject position are physical and linguistic performances of discourses at a certain time and in a particular place; namely people consciously and unconsciously present themselves in different situations through which they give impressions to others. His view is in alignment with Goffman's (1981) understanding of identity. He sees individuals as speakers or performers who act as animators, authors, and principals, all of which explain the intricate relationship among the self, the other, and the institution. Davies and Harre (1999) believe that individuals situate themselves and are situated by others through participating in discursive practices, which is termed positioning.

Weedon (1987), however, prefers subjectivity to identity. She points out that subjectivity is unstable, contradictory, ongoing, and constructed through discourse. The construction of subjectivity is fraught with conflict, ambivalence, and struggle, because when "there is a space between the position of the subject offered by a discourse and individual interest, a resistance to that subject position is produced" (p. 109). Therefore, a negotiation of difference (Papastergiadis, 2000) takes place to address the acute discomfort (Bauman, 1991) so as to secure "ontological security" (Giddens, 1991). The negotiation is called "critical [experience]" (Block, 2002), or a struggle to approach a balance. In the interaction between individuals' agency and social structures, power plays a significant role (Bourdieu, 1977b; Norton, 2000, 2010; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Peirce, 1995, Weedon, 1997), which either enables or constrains individuals to act as participants of a community of practice.

Additionally, Lave and Wenger (1991) and Block (2007) have proposed that identity conditions and is conditioned by social structure and social interaction, both of which influence each other. In this respect, identity work is a process and product of the interaction of individuals

with their learning contexts (Bourdieu, 1977b; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Norton, 1997, 2000; Peirce, 1995; Weedon, 1997). Therefore, identity is ambivalent, hybrid, and contradictory in nature (Block, 2007; Canagarajah, 2004; Commins, 2000; Miller, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 2000, 2011; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2004; Peirce, 1995).

Block (2007) viewed identity as a complicated and multifaceted construct informed by ethnolinguistic, sociolinguistic, applied linguistic, and psycholinguistic perspectives. It is framed as “socially constructed, self-conscious, ongoing narratives that individuals perform, interpret and project in dress, bodily movements, actions and language” (p. 27). Specifically, Block (2007) categorized identity as seven intertwined types, including ethnic, racial, national, migrant, gender, social class, and language identity. In his discussion of language identity, a relationship between the individual’s sense of self and a particular language is essential. Language identity is multidimensional, because utterances can be understood as indicators of a speaker’s identity.

In addition, language identity is the identity given by other members in a speech community. Block (2007) also argued that multimodality has an impact on language identity work, because communication is “also about a range of multi-sensory accompaniments to the linguistic, such as hairstyle, clothing, facial expressions, gait and so on” (p. 41). Furthermore, Block stressed the importance of audibility in second language identity development, which is parallel to Miller’s (2003b) research on immigrant Chinese students in Australia where L2 learners strived to make their voices heard in order to become identifiable and accepted members of a community of practice.

To address the relationship among language, identity, and power, Block (2007) focused his attention on three different contexts, such as adult migrant contexts, foreign language contexts, and study abroad contexts. In analyzing identity negotiation of adult migrants in

multiple contexts, Block refers to many studies, for example, Broeder, Bremer, and Roberts (1996) conducted one study together. Also, Goldstein (1997), Norton (2000), Teutsch-Dwyer (2001), and Block (2006) did some research on adult migrants. The study of Broeder et al. (1996) was carried out in European countries (the UK, Germany, France, and Netherlands) and four languages were used: English, French, German, and Dutch by immigrants with different first languages such as Italian, Spanish, and Arabic. The research of Broeder et al. (1996) focused on “negotiation of understanding” between the immigrant L2 learners and the local service providers who spoke the local language, which involved about 30 individual cases. This work demonstrates its advantages in several ways, such as the data collected over a long period of time, more than four languages involved, and an inquiry on assumptions about naturalistic second language learning contexts. However, their research has salient shortcomings. Block cited Norton’s (2000) critique on this study by saying that detailed life stories of immigrant L2 learners were missing. Social factors and social structures that might influence L2 learning were not addressed. He pointed out that more identity issues needed to be discussed. For example, misunderstanding between immigrant L2 learners and the local interlocutors may result in immigrants’ self-positioning of inferiority and powerlessness. Furthermore, it might lead to Otherness and discrimination by the local language speakers.

Goldstein’s (1997) case of Portuguese women in the context of a factory in Toronto paints a more detailed picture of identity negotiation. After using observations, interviews, and recording workplace conversations, she found that English was not fundamental to the real lives of these assembly line workers. Portuguese was the power at the lower level of these women’s lives, whereas English was the power at the higher level in the factory and outside of the factory. In effect, a lack of opportunity to practice English prevented these Portuguese women workers

from accumulating cultural capital. This in turn limited their chance to gain independence and prosperity in a larger society.

Block (2007) thoroughly analyzes Norton's (2000) study on female immigrant L2 learners in Toronto and pays close attention to how the individual's agency interacts with the language learning context and how identity is a complicated and dynamic site of struggle. In her study, Norton situated her participants in different contexts: work, family, and friends. The most salient feature of her study is that participants used personal narratives to tell their stories, which shows the readers who they were and how they interacted with the social world. Since the five cases were constructed from individual stories of language learning and use, the examples of interactions were absent. Interactions might offer extra perspectives on identity negotiation and development.

Except for examining identity development of migrant L2 learners in multiple contexts, Block (2007) explored how foreign language learners construct subject positions in their own countries. To this end, Block discussed a selection of research conducted in FL contexts (Belz, 2002; Block, 1995, 2000; Kramsch, 2000; Lantolf & Genung, 2002; Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; McMahill, 1997, 2001; Thorne, 2003), including the US, Australia, Spain, Japan, and France, where many different languages were involved. All the studies carried out in FL settings are related to target language-mediated identity construction and negotiation. Most participants in these studies used their first language repertoires and the local multimodalities to facilitate their new subject position performance, instead of using target language resources. In this sense, the FL settings might not be effective for target language mediated identity development.

It is worth noting that Thorne's (2003) work seems to display significant advantages of Internet-mediated communication, which contributes to emergent subject positions construction.

In Thorne's (2003) study, the participant (Kirsten) took advantage of Instant Messenger, email, and NetMeeting to study French with her French partner (Oliver) who lived in France. The study considered Kirsten a valid and legitimate interlocutor, and also an English language expert for her partner. Thus, Block (2007) concluded that the Internet-mediated exchange program provided the French learner with opportunities to construct new identities in French. However, Block also warns that the continuity and feasibility of the Internet-mediated exchange program in identity development are problematic.

Furthermore, Block's (2007) review on identity development in the context of study abroad (Kinging, 2003; Kinginger & Whitworth, 2005; Murphy-Lejeune, 2003; Pellegrino, 2005; Polanyi, 1995; Skarin, 2002; Talburt & Steward, 1999; Twombly, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998, 2002) illustrates that study abroad experiences not only affect language learners' inhabited identities (self-positioning), but also influence ascribed identities (positioned by others). For example, in Kinginger's (2003) research, the participant Alice, an American undergraduate student studied French in France for four years. During her stay in France, Alice encountered unpleasant experiences, which were opposite to her imagined community and imagined identity. The different learning experiences resulted in her refusal to "develop a common American-student-abroad subject position coupled with her inability and refusal to develop a French-university-student subject position" (p. 174), which led to her consideration to commit suicide. She desired to be a fully functioning member of the community of the French university; unfortunately, her prior difficult life trajectories along with the isolation and alienation in France rejected her membership of the target language community. However, an accidental debate on American politics with a French student awakened her consciousness of gaining cultural capital in order to realize her fulfillment. Block argued that the study abroad program opened up

opportunities for Alice to find a place in the French-speaking community by developing broad and deep social contacts with native speakers in France.

By discussing identity issues in different contexts, such as adult migrant L2 learners in Europe and North America, the foreign language settings, and the study abroad context, Block concluded that the foreign language context offers fewer opportunities for language learners to study an additional language than adult migrant contexts. However, Internet-based language learning does exhibit the potential for target language-mediated identity development. The study abroad context also contributes to target language-mediated identity work. In addition, these studies attach different emphasis to identity work, including a greater focus on social class for immigrant L2 learners, emergence of local *lingua francas* in European countries, expansion of first language repertoires, electronically mediated identity performance, and psychoanalytic perspective on identity.

Norton (2000) took a different angle to scrutinize the relationship among identity, language, and power. She proposed that an understanding of L2 learners' identity negotiation needs to integrate the L2 learner with the L2 learning context. More importantly, power relations that impact the social interaction between the L2 learner and the target language speaker need to be discussed. Keeping this emphasis in mind, Norton defined identity as an individual's understanding of his or her relationship to the social and cultural world, an understanding of the relationship that is constructed at a particular time and in a particular place, and an understanding and imagining of future possibilities. By pointing out the weakness of traditional theories of second language acquisition that extremely emphasized individuals' factors but ignored social impacts (Gardner, 1989; Krashen, 1981), Norton (2000) suggested that identity negotiation "must be understood with reference to relations of power between language learners and target

language speakers” (p. 6). Following Freire (1985), Foucault (1980), and Giroux (1988), Norton made an argument that power is a socially constructed relation among people, communities, and institutions through which symbolic resources and educational materials are produced and reproduced.

In congruence with Norton, Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) have assumed that identity is embedded in power relations. Language learning, as a process of gaining symbolic capital, can convert into economic, social, and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977b), which is unequally distributed within a certain community in which language learners might lack enough opportunities to achieve any kind of capital mentioned above. They thus claimed that non-official language speakers (or L2 learners) are “subject to symbolic domination” (p. 15) and an examination of symbolic power in L2 learning needs to be carried out.

### **Discourse, Subjectivity, and Agency**

Modern interpretations of discourse have enriched and expanded its definition; for example, Pau du Gay (1996) explained it as follows:

By the term ‘discourse’ ... [theorists] refer to a group of statements which provide a language for talking about a topic and a way of producing a particular kind of knowledge about a topic. Thus the term refers both to the production of knowledge through language and representation and the way that knowledge is institutionalized, shaping social practices and setting new practices into play. (p. 63)

Pau du Gay’s definition accentuates the importance of knowledge producing and new rules generating through and within discourse. Weedon (1987) followed the work of Michael Foucault (1980) and interprets that discourses are “ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them” (p. 108). She explained that discourse is not just about ways of thinking, behaving, and generating knowledge, but also about how individuals’ minds and

behaviors shape discourse by participating in the producing and reproducing of power relations. Discourse and power go hand in hand, in which power is enacted within discourses where individual subjects are constituted and governed. Also, an individual's agency actively influences discourse.

James Paul Gee (1996) provided a broader interpretation of this term, which adds non-linguistic elements to it. Gee's Discourses with a capital D and the plural form show a more detailed and specific definition:

Discourses are ways of being in the world, or forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, belief, attitudes and social identities, as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes. A Discourse is a sort of identity kit which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write so as to take on a particular social role that others will recognize. (Gee, 1996, p. 127)

Gee has suggested that Discourses convey individuals' identities through which everybody plays different roles by following certain social practices and norms. Jan Blommaert (2005) enriched the definition of Discourses further and claimed that "discourse comprises all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of use" (Blommaert, 2005, p. 3). His definition echoed Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) construct of multimodality, which speaks of "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event, together with the particular way in which these modes are combined" (p. 20). In this sense, a discourse is constitutive of linguistic and non-linguistic components, which shapes and indicates one's identity.

McKay and Wong's (1996) research has illustrated the intricate relationship among discourse, subjectivity, and agency. For example, they explored four Chinese ESL students' identity negotiation in four multiple discourses in a high school in California, such as model minority discourse, colonialist/racialized discourse, gender discourse, social and school

discourse. By the exploration, they found that those ESL students as complex social beings attempted to reposition themselves or resist being positioned through exercising their individuals' agency to interact with multiple discourses.

### **Identity, Investment, and Imagined Communities**

Norton Peirce (1995) proposed that the conception of L2 learners' social identity needs to be integrated into the relationship between language learners and the social world, since it has been neglected by traditional second language acquisition theorists. To this end, relations of power that affect the interaction between L2 learners and native speakers should be taken into account to understand how language learners remain silent or speak up to resist marginalized positions. Her analysis of diaries written by her participants confirms Weedon's (1987) theory of subjectivity: social identity is multilayered; subjectivity is both the process and product of conflicts and struggles when individuals negotiate their identities in various social sites; social identity is changing over time and across space because individuals are active and agentive human beings. This understanding of social identity manifests the weakness of the theory of motivation (Gardener, 1989) in the field of second language acquisition.

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1977b) construct of cultural capital, Norton Peirce used an economic metaphor investment to capture the complex relationships of L2 learners to the second language and their ambivalence to speak it. She claimed that L2 learners' investment in language learning attempts to gain access to symbolic capital and/or material resources, which might valorize their academic and cultural capital. In this vein, an investment in learning an L2 is to invest in learners' social identity development because the interaction between the L2 learner and the native speaker is a process of identity negation and re-negotiation. In addition to introducing the notion of investment to identity negotiation, Norton Peirce supported the position

that “the right to speak” and “the power to impose reception” should be taken into consideration in the field of second language acquisition because it is not often the case that “those who speak regard those who listen as worthy to listen and that those who listen regard those who speak as worthy to speak” (p. 18).

Rooted in Wenger’s (1999) construct of imagination, an increasing number of studies of identity and language learning have shifted their attention to how language learners adopt their imagined identities in their imagined communities (Kinginger, 2003; Norton, 2001; Piller & Takahashi, 2006). Wenger explained imagination as follows:

The concept of imagination refers to a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves. Imagination in this sense is looking at an apple and seed to see an apple tree. (p. 176)

When language learners project their identities into their imagined communities, they might have strong investment in the language learning and identity development. Norton and Kamal’s (2003) research in Karachi, Pakistan has evidenced that the participants were asked to re-imagine their community where it was socially and politically unstable, and also asked to imagine their desirable future community. The students’ imagined community was literate, knowledgeable, and technologically advanced. Students expressed their strong desires for knowledge, technology, and peace. Students also conveyed what kind of community they wanted to inhabit and what kind of people they wanted to be, which articulated the relationship between imagined community and imagined identities.

### **Audibility, Voice, and Self-Representation**

Since language socialization and use is central to self-representation, Miller (2003b) contended that second language learners need to gain self-representation in dominant discourses to achieve access to social, cultural, and academic materials and symbols to construct and

negotiate their identities in multiple sites to become authorized members of a mainstream community. She painted a similar picture of identity and discourse to Gee's Discourse and extends the analysis of Discourse beyond its nature and structure to examine how language use and socialization are tightly tied to identity negotiation. After observing and interviewing high school ESL students in Australia, Miller found that L2 learners' voices were differently respected and differently audible, which seems to be a politics of speaking ESL in schools. Therefore, she argued that learning a second language is to gain the right to speak and to be audible to others within and without schools. Her study has shown that L2 learners from subordinate groups were marginalized and silenced because of their inability to represent themselves or to challenge their positioned and stigmatized identities.

Speaking per se is an essential means of representation, through which identity is constructed, agency is exercised, and self-advocacy is manifested. In this regard, speaking formulates aspects of identities, but requires the cooperation of the listener, who not only hears, but believes. Therefore, Miller concluded that second language learners need "access to spoken interactions with English speakers in which their voices are heard, and their identities seen as usable capital in the first place" (p. 312).

Kramsch and Lam (1999) alleged that writing has potential for second language learners to voice who they are and how they build relationships with each other and the target language community in which agency is manifested by voice through language socialization and language use. In their study, Kramsch and Lam (1999) proposed a construction of "the third positions," where the written text helps "non-native speakers define their relation toward the native speakers whose language they are using and to offer them what we call textual identities of the third kind" (p. 70-71). L2 learners take advantage of the third positions to acknowledge and confront the

conflicts and struggles in identity construction and reconstruction in order to find their voices and make their voices heard. The view of “the third position” echoes Canagarajah’s (2003) statement that L2 learners construct their voice to find their own niche that symbolizes their own values and interests by negotiating a position “in the interstices of discourses and institutions” (p. 268). Writing provides avenues and resources for constructing voice and a sense of self.

### **Identity and Literacies**

The acquisition of literacies affects individuals’ (re)conceptualization of themselves and their roles in society. For example, Egbo (2003) reveals an interconnection between literacies practices and social reproduction (Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991; Foucault, 1980; Freire & Macedo, 1987) by examining the impact of literacies on Nigerian women’s social identity construction and negation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Literacies have been seen as a prerequisite for Nigerian women to participate in social production and reproduction. She argued that literacies, as a dialectic construct, offered options and ligatures for those women, both of which increased social options and expanded social networks that produced social and cultural capital. Literacies are thus markers of social identity, which affected Nigerian women’s sense of self, self-confidence, self-efficacy, and self-esteem (Ballara, 1992; Chlebowska, 1990; Stromquist, 1990). Literacies are effective tools for those women to negotiate their identities within multiple places, both in households and larger social communities. She concluded that literacies enable women to develop their personal and social identities in numerous ways, which empower them to get closer to the center from the margins.

Similarly, Norton (2010) believes that investment and identity are integral in that investment in L2 learning can increase L2 learners’ literacies skills by accruing material and symbolic resources, which in turn re-valuate their self-worthiness, their identities, and their

possibilities for future development. She also suggested that imagined communities might have stronger impact on L2 learners' current investments than those real communities with which learners daily engage. A case in point is one of the research projects conducted in Pakistan in Norton's (2010) study, where students related literacies practices to imagined communities, which functioned as catalysts for their investments in learning. Another point made by Norton is that L2 learners' sense of ownership on meaning making promote their identity development and further facilitate their literacies practices. For example, the participants in Norton's (2010) work, showed significant pleasure, interest and confidence in reading and interpreting comic books. Students employed their prior knowledge and experiences to reflect on what they needed to critique the plots, characters, events, and stories related to the comics, which established a sense of ownership of language and knowledge.

### **Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Literacies**

#### **Sociocultural Theory**

Founded and developed by Vygotsky and other Vygotskian scholars, sociocultural theory is a theory about the development of mind and consciousness through semiotic mediation (e.g., language) (Duff, 2002; Frawley, 1997; Lantolf, 2000; Leontiev, 1981; Roebuck, 2000; Wertsch, 1985, 1991, 1998; van Lier, 2004). Sociocultural theory has experienced three generations, including the first generation centering on cultural mediation, the second generation emphasizing cultural activity and its continuity formed as the third generation (Thorne, 2005). Sociocultural theory stresses the importance of human development within/through social contexts and material and symbolic mediation, in which one's cultural development--the mediated process of internalization--takes place on two planes: the interpsychological plane (the process of collective development) and the intrapsychological plane (the process of individual development)

(Vygotsky, 1978). Internalization, in conjunction with mediation is essential to sociocultural theory. Internalization is similar to social-constructionist constructs of apprenticeship and instructed participation (Rogoff, 1996), but these two are slightly different, because internalization is more transformational and reproductive than apprenticeship (Duff, 2007).

The concept of the zone of proximal development, called ZPD, derives from sociocultural theory. Vygotsky defined it as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 68). ZPD shows the difference between the development achieved individually and the development accomplished cooperatively, which offers a basis for teachers to scaffold learners (Duff, 2007; Lantolf & Thorne, 2007; Ohta, 2000; Roebuck, 2000).

Wertsch’s (1985) understanding of sociocultural theory suggests that the core of Vygotsky’s theory includes three interdefined themes:

a reliance on a genetic or developmental method; (2) the claim that higher mental processes in the individual have their origin in social processes; and (3) the claim that mental processes can be understood only if we understand the tools and signs that mediate them. (p. 14)

He further explained that human development (e.g. higher mental processes) in Vygotsky’s definition refers to transformation of different forms of mediation. Mediation, the key to human development is realized through signs and symbols that carry meanings, which function as communication tools. Language is one of the fundamental signs that mediates human mental functioning, which dovetails with Bakhtin’s (1981, 1986) theory on dialogism.

Rogoff’s (2003) theory of cultural nature of human development aligns with Vygotsky (1978) and Leontiev’s (1978) activity theory, which emphasizes participation in cultural practices and traditions in communities. Participation is achieved by constantly revising and

adapting cultural and biological heritage in different circumstances to change the world and relations between the situations and humans. The heritage here can be understood as physical and psychological artifacts used to mediate humans' thinking and behaviors, which is the core tenet of sociocultural theory. Artifacts indelibly contribute to human development. Rogoff's (2003) argument that "individual development constitutes and is constituted by social and cultural-historical activities and practices" (p. 51) speaks of intertwined relationships between human development and cultural processes. She further claimed that individual development is a process of transformative participation in various sociocultural activities.

Supported by Vygotsky (1978) and Bakhtin (1981, 1986), van Lier (2000) conceptualizes language learning from an ecological perspective, which accentuates the importance of environment on learning, because he believes that "the learner is immersed in an environment full of potential meanings" (p. 246) and learning is the process of development that deals with the environment and its meanings. Cognition and learning rely heavily on representational and ecological processes. Language itself is dialogical (Bakhtin, 1981), representational, and ecological. In this regard, he suggested that it is imperative to re-conceptualize language learning and context from comprehensive perspectives.

Negotiation of meaning is fundamental in interaction (Gass, 2008; Long, 1996), which catalyzes interactional adjustments by skilled interlocutors or native speakers who transfer information to the ones who know less. Language learning also involves power relations, action, thought, and semiotic activities (Kress, 2003) in which the context or the environment provides the active learners with a "'semiotic budget' (analogous to the energy budget of an ecosystem) to make meanings. Affordance, coined by Gibson (1977) referred to a mutual relationship between an organism and its environment. In language learning, the environment full of language offers

active and participating learners' affordances to engage in interactions. These affordances for language learning are socially mediated.

### **Sociocultural Theory and Agency**

Thorne (2005) theorizes agency as either enabled or constrained by material and symbolic mediation and the community of practices (Lave & Wenger, 1991), because agency "is a relationship that is constantly co-constructed and renegotiated with those around the individual and with the society at large" (Lantolf & Pavlenko, 2001). Thorne drew on two contrast cases in his research to manifest his observation that L2 learners might be influenced by their learning histories, language ideologies, and discourses imbedded in or produced by a particular institution or setting. In the first case, an American learner of French (Kirsten) attended an exchange program called Internet-mediated intercultural communication in France, where she communicated with her key-pal through Instant Messenger (IM) to improve her French proficiency. The interaction between Kirsten and her partner allowed access to rich language learning resources that she could not get from dictionaries or textbooks. Her key-pal's assistance in her French enriched and deepened her linguistic and cultural understanding, which demonstrated the function of agency at the inter-psychological level.

However, in the second case, the participant, PG, a Ph.D. student was interested in the Chinese language and registered for a Chinese class. Unfortunately, a lack of opportunity to speak in class, the instructor's negative attitude towards the participant, and the strict audiolingual pedagogy reduced her desire to realize her fulfillment. These two cases illustrate that different interpersonal dynamics impacts language learners' capacities to perform, which results in divergent developmental trajectories. Thorne thus concludes that agency is shaped by engaging in particular social and cultural practices.

## **Sociocultural Theory and L2 Learning**

Sociocultural theory has significant theoretical influences on L2 learning. For example, instructional conversations used in Donato's (2000) research reflect Vygotsky's concept of cultural development. Donato has contended that instructional conversations capture communicative and cognitive functions of interactions between novices and experts. Interactions are observed through socializing novices into language learning in a rich linguistic and cultural context. Sociocultural theory illuminates the understanding of significance of interactions to students' cognitive and linguistic growth. In brief, language learning is situated because learning takes place in different ways under different learning situations where students' agency matters.

Following Vygotsky and Vygotskian scholars, Lantolf and Thorne (2007) make a claim that a child's mental development heavily relies on regulation, one way of mediation, which includes object-regulation (mediation through a particular object), other-regulation (including implicit and explicit mediation), and self-regulation (the ability to achieve a specific learning goal with minimal or no support from more competent adults). The latter two forms of mediation are realized mainly through language, which is the most powerful and universal symbolic artifact that is used to mediate one's psychological activities. A main focus of their study is on mediation through the tool of L2 in which an emphasis on mediation and ZPD is accentuated by analyzing corrective feedback and its impact on L2 learning.

In the discussion of a case study conducted by Alijaafreh and Lantolf (1994), Lantolf and Thorne (2007) claimed that error correction including the use of articles, tense, prepositions, and modal verbs in academic writing in a form of collaboration and interaction was a negotiation process. The process of negotiation has implicitly and explicitly affected linguistic development, because "[d]evelopment in this context is the interaction of the mediation that is dialogically

negotiated between the learner and others that results in enhanced self-regulation” (p. 211). ZPD in this situation functioned as a dynamic measurement that showed the participants’ current developmental level and their potential development level. To realize the actual development from the potential development, a graduated and contingent assistance was entailed based on continuous assessment of L2 learners’ ZPD. This case study demonstrates that the L2 learners’ linguistic performance was mediated and improved by the tutor at the outset, and gradually, the learners internalized what they had been taught and gained greater capability to function automatically.

Duff’s (2007) understanding of sociocultural theory is complementary to that of Lantolf and Throne (2007), but he took a different angle to scrutinize the impact of sociocultural theory on language learning. He paid close attention to the relationship between the concept of community learning (Wenger, 1999; Lave & Wenger, 1991) and second language socialization. Community of practice involves old-timers and newcomers who mutually engage in various activities, which builds the foundation for learning. A sense of belonging is an essential component of a learning community and identity formation. Community of practice has a major impact on second language socialization, which is used to examine activities and communities into which L2 learners are being situated and socialized and how activities facilitate or hinder L2 learners’ legitimate participation and identity development within their learning communities.

Duff’s (2007) study on Korean undergraduate students who studied English in Canada demonstrated three patterns of community learning experience. The learning communities in this research were placed in different settings, including dorm communities, club communities, academic course communities, and Korean communities (only Korean ESL learners). By carrying out interviews with 45 participants, the researcher found that Korean ESL learners had limited

access to Anglo-community life. There were several reasons for the limitation to the local English-mediated social networks, one of which was the pressure of Korean conformity and affiliation. They did not want to disconnect with their Korean community, because it might be helpful for the students to build connections in Korea for the future. In addition, a respect for older members in the Korean community constrained younger students' involvement in Anglo-community activities. Even though some students had tried to make connections to the local English social networks, their social, cultural, and linguistic differences from the local community made it difficult for them to continue the interaction with their Canadian counterparts. These participants' language socialization was negatively influenced by self-positioning and positioning by others in different learning communities.

### **Sociocultural Theory and Language Socialization**

Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003) have contended that second language acquisition is a process of language socialization through using this language. They made a clear point that cognition is developed through social interaction, because knowledge construction is “*both a cognitive and a social process*” (p. 156). Grounded in sociolinguistic and anthropological studies on communication and interaction (Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1972, 1980), language acquisition and language socialization foregrounds interaction. The complexity and variability of social contexts, along with learners' previous experiences, cross-cultural variations, and individual differences complicate language socialization. The complexity of language socialization often constrains language learning (e.g., syntax, semantics, phonology, and discourse practices) (Hymes, 1972; Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001; Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003).

Some neo-Vygotskians, like Rogoff (1990) and Wertsch (1985), have argued that the development of higher-order cognitive skills results from social interaction with more competent peers and adults. The essential interactions occur within learners' ZPD; namely, it is not considerably ahead of L2 learners' independent capability. Lave and Wenger's (1999) participation theory offered new ways to understand second language socialization. They considered L2 learners' access to participation in expert performance as fundamental to acquire a second language, because L2 learners might be excluded from linguistic or cultural resources. The focus on L2 learning access, identity negotiation and renegotiation, and movement from the margin to the central area is congruent with the research of Giddens (1979) and Bourdieu (1977b), which emphasizes situated meaning negotiation and identity construction.

Language socialization speaks to a domain that captures language learners' development of social and cultural capability and sensibility based on language use, which is stated as "socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language" (Schiefelin & Ochs, 1986b, p. 163). A predominant tenet of language socialization research is to understand how competent socializers, artifacts, and structured environment synergistically promote novices' engagement in communicative practices.

Language socialization is characterized by agency, cooperation, and scaffolding. Another tenet of language socialization is that when novices become proficient communicators, they also become capable members of a particular community. Watson-Gegeo (2004) held that a shift in rethinking of mind, language, context, and epistemology has fundamentally transformed research on L2 learning, acquisition, and socialization. New understandings about cognitive development and language learning have triggered an inquiry on language socialization, which highlights the importance of language learners' agentic and selective involvement in cultural and social

interactions in complex, dynamic, and fluid social networks. She contended that the paradigm of language socialization for second language learning has dramatically revolutionized the research on L2 socialization and use.

Swain and Deters (2007) took a slightly different angle to discuss influences of sociocultural milieu on L2 learners' agency and identity negotiation, which argue that the specific social environment is the source of L2 learners' mental development. In agreement with Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, they stressed the importance of physical and psychological tools on mind development in socialization and interaction in which mediational means, contexts, and motives and goals are paramount. They argued that even though the framework of community of practice shares similarities with language socialization, there is one important difference between the two; that is, the former is more related to power relations than the latter. The core of community of practice is the concept of legitimate peripheral participation. Full participation requires access to a given community's resources and opportunities for socialization, but the prerequisite is that the learners must be deemed as legitimate participants. In this regard, access is defining and crucial.

The framework of community of practice also emphasizes "activity in and with the world" (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 33). In addition, the community of practice involves identity negotiation and re-negotiation, which shows that "our membership constitutes our identity, not just through reified markers of membership but more fundamentally through the forms of competence that it entails" (Wenger, 1999, p. 152). Swain and Deters concluded that the community of practice can be interpreted as a site of struggle when learners move across different boundaries from different communities.

## **Literacy, New Literacies, and Multi-literacies**

The definition of literacy has been changed according to the development of society, because expectations for literacy standards have become much higher than before due to technological and economic development (Verhoeven, 1994). He viewed literacy as a continuous social and cultural practice, which constantly meets humans' needs, and he accentuated the importance of dynamic and functional features of literacy. Dynamic refers to changing abilities across time and space. However, functional literacy consists of grammatical competence, discourse competence, decoding competence, strategic competence, and sociolinguistic competence, which emphasizes linguistic knowledge, language use, and social contexts.

Gebhard (2004) claimed that fast capitalism requires language learners to gain new and critical literacy skills to meet the challenge of new technology and economy patterns by reforming traditional second language teaching methods. He suggested that literacy needs to be redefined to take into account the relationships between “texts, both oral and written, and the sociocultural, economic, and historical context” (p. 247), because the traditional definition of literacy emphasized basic reading and writing ability, but ignored creative, critical, and analytical thinking. Critical thinking is extremely significant in the context of new and fast capitalism, so it is important for the new generation—designers of social futures (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000) ---to achieve critical literacy abilities to read the world by reading words (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Take reading as an example, deep and sophisticated literacy skills should be developed by “making complex arguments, synthesizing ideas across texts and personal or cultural experiences, and examining their experiences in relation to larger societal systems” (Lewis et al., 2007, p. 45). L2 learners equipped with multiple skills are able to participate in

cultural, economic, and civic life in the milieu of the new capitalism and the new world order (Gee, 2012; Luke, 2004, 2012; Morrell, 2008).

It is equally important to achieve multiple new literacy skills to communicate by taking advantage of multiple modes in the specific context of burgeoning local diversity, multimedia technologies, and global connectedness (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2012; Kress, 2003, 2010; Lam, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003b; New London Group, 1996; Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). In this sense, literacy should be plural.

Gilster and Glister (1997) hold that digital literacies are key to multiliteracies and new literacies. They define digital literacies as abilities to collect, process, analyze, and synthesize information by using digital technologies and multiple communication tools; abilities to interpret media, to produce and reproduce texts and images, to effectively and efficiently communicate with others in order to exchange information and enrich knowledge through digital manipulation. Digital tools offer enormous ways for learners to informally, collaboratively, and playfully engage in screen-based literacies practices by using blogs, Twitters, Facebook, avatars, etc. (Carrington & Robinson, 2009).

## **L2 Literacies and Identity Negotiation**

According to Kern (2000) and Kline (1998), L2 literacies practice involves social participation and interaction in which L2 learners learn new traditions, build new values, and embrace new beliefs and norms, and develop new ways to see the world (Gee, 2015). In the process of social participation, L2 learners not only gain linguistic knowledge, but also enhance their abilities to use languages as tools to realize specific communicative functions.

Kern and Schultz's (2005) proposed that language must be understood within its contexts including both immediate contexts, such as relationships among the reader, speaker, and writer

and available resources and so forth, and sociocultural settings. They also pointed out that L2 literacies not only emphasize new modes to analyze and interpret texts and contexts, but also accentuate human realities (e.g., L2 learners' agency and identity construction). An emphasis on multimodality and identity stressed by Kern and Schultz (2005) dovetails with van Lier's (2000) ecological approach to L2 learning. His suggestion on L2 learning illustrates that learning is not just a process of knowledge assimilation, but the development of coping with the world and its meanings. Also, he claimed that language is about relations of thinking, action, and power, not objects. Meaning-making includes linguistic forms and semiotic ways, such as drawings, artifacts, and gestures and so on. This ecological perspective on L2 learning aligns with Sfarid's (1998) metaphor of participation in learning, which she interpreted learning as community building. L2 learners are active participants of community of practice; knowing is to belong to and participate in the community through communicating and interacting with other members.

Likewise, Lam (2000) maintained that L2 literacies learning is a process of socialization for membership in a particular literate community in which an L2 learner enacts a particular sociocultural role and identity. Following Weedon's (1987) understanding of identity, Lam considered that L2 learners might negotiate their identities through selectively appropriating literacies resources. Drawing on the works of McKay and Wong (1996), Peirce (1995), Zamel (1997), and Kramersch (2000), she proposed that L2 learners design their identities through voice, which captures discursive processes of selecting, juxtaposing, or reposition present social roles by using multiple modalities to represent self and others (Kress, 2003). She further remarked that

design involves the orchestration of existing resources—such as linguistic patterns, genres, and discourses—in potentially transformative ways to achieve the designer's communicative purpose, particularly when the designer's interest is at odds with existing representations of social reality. (p. 461)

In the process of designing, learners might negotiate and re-negotiate their identities in their community where they gain representational and communicative resources and develop their L2 literacies. In her study, Lam (2000) focused on a Chinese male teenager (Almon) who established an online community where he actively and affectively communicated with his pen pals. This online community served as a platform for Almon to socialize with his peers through language, and practice his L2 literacies by which his multiple identities were negotiated. This online community offered Almon an opportunity to develop his identities; he would not otherwise have had the chance to articulate his own voice in meaning making and literacies improvement in his language learning class. While he encountered marginalization and exclusion from his mainstream ESL classroom, the online community enabled him to construct a sense of self, belonging, and connectedness to the world of the English-speaking group. Almon, as an agentive community participant, had involved in cross-cultural and linguistic enrichment through community building (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Sfard, 1998; Wenger, 1999), which demonstrated his trajectory of L2 literacies development.

Ajayi's (2009) inquiry into ESL students in a junior high school in the U.S. demonstrates the use of visual representations to interpret advertisement images to participate in L2 literacies practices. He viewed literacies as capabilities to construct and construe "the different possibilities of meanings made available by differing textual forms associated with diverse domains such as the Internet, videogames, visual images, graphics, and layouts" (p. 585). This definition mirrors influences of the change of demography, social-cultural contexts, and technological realities in L2 literacies practices. In Ajayi's (2009) study, 18 adolescent ESL students participated in interpreting an advertisement by drawing pictures and composing verb texts. Specifically, students used both language and other semiotic modes to configure and frame

what they understood and they aimed to convey based on their cultural and lived experiences. Students' interpretation of the advertisement showed that these ESL learners critically consumed information of advertisement in ways that matched their interests, experiences, and identities. Also, the study revealed that multimodal literacies seemed to have potential to encourage and engage ESL learners to create imagined communities, take on new identities, and challenge their actual social and cultural worlds. More importantly, the employment of advertisement texts to carry on literacies practices appeared to serve as a trigger for critical literacies practice that connects the immediate communicative environment (the classroom) to a larger, socio-cultural context (the broader society) (Kern & Schultz, 2005). In addition, students' shared knowledge and practices associated with the text, such as student authors' explanation of their own verbal and visual interpretation, comments on others' works, discussion on curious emergent themes, and clarifications of utterances affectively encouraged them to learn a second language.

### **Research on Multimodality and Identity Development**

#### **Multimodality, Design, and Identity**

Grounded in Halliday's (1978) social semiotic theory, multimodality extends beyond his theory of language that meaning is realized in a variety of modes (Ajayi, 2008, 2009; Albers & Harste, 2007; Jewitt, 2006, 2008; Kalantzis & Cope 2012; Kendrick, Jones, Mutonyi, & Norton, 2006; Kress, 2000, 2003; 2010; Nelson, 2006; Rowsell & Walsh, 2011). Kalantzis and Cope (2012) viewed multimodality as a theory about meaning making in which the written text, as a major mode of meaning, interfaces with "visual, audio, gestural and spatial patterns of meaning" (p. 191). Rowsell and Walsh (2011) suggested that modes should be understood as regularized and motivated sets of resources, including visuals, sound effects, body movements, and animation and other resources. Selected modes either work together or separately to accomplish

a special effect in texts. Such effects are designed, composed, and displayed in differentiated ways compared with traditional linguistic text features.

Some other semiotic resources, such as artifacts and practices, also function as modes to make meanings (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kress, 2000, 2003; Kress & Leeuwen, 2001). All modes are shaped by their social and cultural appropriation into semiotic resources (Jewitt, 2006).

Different modes function differently, like “[w]riting *names* and image *shows*, while color *frames* and *highlights*; each to maximize effect and benefit” (Italics added by Kress) (Kress, 2010, p. 1).

Since multiple modes are used to make and design meaning (Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2003; New London Group, 1996), the notion of literacy has been expanded to multimodal literacies.

Multimodal literacies capture several features, which are not limited to reading and writing; new and digital media are used to practice literacies; multiple modes offer more learning opportunities; learners are meaning designers through unique ways to negotiate and express meanings; and meaning-making is viewed as transformation, transforming the meaning maker and designer and their social and cultural world (Jewitt, 2006).

Kress (2000) contended that all texts are inherently multimodal, although one modality might be dominant among others. Language may not be the predominant modality anymore mainly because of a shift from the written text (book or printed pages) to screen, a shift from old technologies of print to new digital and electronic tools, and a shift from the dominant mode of writing to the mode of image, videos, and others. In the theory of multimodality, Jewitt and Kress (2003) identified four main aspects that consist of representation of meaning, including materiality, framing, design, and production, which the researcher addresses in turn.

Materiality means materials, such as written texts, pictures, photographs, fabric, and other physical artifacts and signs, used to convey meanings with cultural affordances and preferences

(Kress, 2000). Materials like photos, animation, moving pictures, and texts combined to represent meaning can be highly interactive and engaging.

Framing shows how all elements of a visual product are arranged or displayed according to space, frame, size, and color and so forth to collectively represent meanings (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Framing involves visual, musical, and spatial modes, in which all elements should be considered to work harmoniously to reach a specific effect; and audience's response and preference must be considered as well. Framing is part of design, which refers to how meaning makers exploit available resources to create representation (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kress, 2000, 2003, 2010; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Framing requires meaning makers' wisdom and experience.

Design is the core of multimodality (Albers & Harste, 2007; Kress, 2003), because it demands imagination, creative and critical thinking, rich and broad cultural and social knowledge, and abilities to analyze and synthesize the functions and affordances of different modes. Design is different from traditional social and semiotic goals of competence (Kress, 2010), which are anchored communication in social and cultural regulation, but design foregrounds meaning makers' realization of their interest by using semiotic resources. Specifically, design is all about communication and meaning based on an ideal of equitable participation in shaping and re-shaping the social, cultural, and semiotic world. Design captures contemporary representation and communication. It transforms social forms and structures, remakes power relations, and changes formation of subjectivity and identity (Kress, 2000, 2003, 2010). Design provides meaning-designers with opportunities to exercise agency and develop their identities by participating in community of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999).

Production “refers both to the creation and organization of the presentation” (Albers & Harste, 2007, p. 14), which is the product or text that exteriorizes and materializes designers’ personal interest, cultural and social consideration, understanding of all modes used in design, agency, and identity.

In alignment with studies of Kress (2000, 2003), Kress and van Leeuwen (1996, 2001), and van Leeuwen (2005), Stein (2008) held that the multimodal theory of communication can be understood as an approach to meaning making drawing on a variety of modes and media that comprise a representational and communicational ensemble. Language is one of the modes; the others include many forms of image, space, gesture, sound, etc., all of which work collaboratively to communicate meanings in an integral and multiple way. She argued that multimodality has implications for meaning-makers’ identity construction and how culture and subjectivity are constructed in a particular learning environment. She further claimed that classrooms might function as transformative sites where meaning-designers’ representational and communicational resources can be used to tap into curriculum and instruction. These multiple resources address diversity of the increasingly globalized and digitalized societies and the development of meaning-makers’ audibility, voice and visibility (Canagarajah, 2003; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Giroux, 1992b; Luke, 2004, 2014; McLaren, 1998; Miller, 2003a, 2003b; Norton & Tooney, 2004).

Even though multimodality is an emergent theory (Jewitt, 2006; Kress, 2003; van Leeuwen, 2005), it has been applied to and developed in a wide range of learning contexts, which includes bilingual education (Kenner, 2000, 2005), literacy enrichment (Ajayi, 2008; Gee, 2004; Kendrick et al. 2006), and video games and learning (Gee, 2003). For example, Ajayi’s (2008) exploration of ESL learners and their teacher’s joint construction of word meanings by

multimodal representation conveys that multimodality transformed conventional pedagogical processes in an actual English language classroom. Thirty-three high school ESL students participated in this study and they employed photos, campaign advertisement, and campaign video clips to produce a political text. Participants engaged in meaning guessing, producing cartoon strips, and group activities, which reveals that ESL learners made use of multimodal resources as means to convey their identity in meaning-making involvement.

The research of Kendrick et al. (2006) suggested that the integration of drawing, photograph, and drama into English classrooms in Uganda schools offered innovative possibilities for students to socialize through English and use English to socialize. In addition, a sense of ownership of meaning-designing significantly improved students' literacies practices and performance in English learning (Norton, 2003). It also provided teachers with possibilities to reform or revamp existing curriculum and instruction that cannot meet the needs of different students' learning orientations (Ajayi, 2009).

### **Technology and L2 Learning**

Research on technology-mediated L2 learning has caught linguists' attention to second language acquisition and socialization (Bloch, 2004; Chappelle, 2003; Cornillie, Thorne, & Desmet, 2012; Egbert, 2005; Kern, 1996, 2006, 2011, 2015; Lam, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, 2012, 2013; Levy, 1997; Nelson, 2006; Thorne, 2003; Thorne, Black & Skyes, 2009; Thorne & Payne, 2005, 2009; Throne & Smith, 2011; Warschauer, 1999, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005; Warschauer & Kern, 2000). Technology in L2 learning offers new forms of communication, meaning negotiation, discourse, authorship, and identity construction. It also provides new ways to create, choose, and maintain language learning communities that across cultural, ethnic, and national boundaries. What does technology mean in this research? A

comprehensive understanding of technology in language learning refers to “the technologies of writing, sound recording, film, and video” (Kern, 2006) by using computers, smart phones, tablets, and other digital tools. Technology in L2 learning includes online conferencing (Hampel & Hauck, 2006), instant messaging (Lam, 2009; Lewis & Fabos, 2005), chat rooms (Egbert, 2005; Levy, 1997; Mohan & Luo, 2005), multimedia L2 writing (Nelson, 2006), online game-based writing (Thorne, Black & Sykes, 2009), writing on Facebook (Reid, 2011), and digital storytelling (Lambert, 2012; Vinogradova, Linville, & Bickel, 2011).

Technology has significantly promoted language learning and socialization in a myriad of aspects. For example, Kramsch, A’Ness, and Lam (2000) argued that computer-mediated language learning improves language users’ sense of agency and a sense of authorship. Kern’s (2006) study on technology in language learning illustrates that technology plays multiple roles in computer assisted language learning, such as tutor, tool as well as medium. Computers provide instruction and feedback, and simulate communicative interaction. Computers also offer user-friendly access to video materials, written, and audio resources. In addition, the Internet provides sites for communication, publication, online learning, and community engagement. Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2004) observed that the Internet makes it possible for immigrant students to socialize through language in a more relaxed environment than that of physical classrooms, because they feel less pressure when they communicate with others online.

In addition, Bloch’s (2004) examination of a group of Chinese L2 writers’ use of cyberspace as an alternative writing community to generate a rhetoric characterized by traditional Chinese rhetorical strategies shows that computer-mediated communication can function as a fertile context for L2 composition. It provided possibilities of emancipation for L2 writers to talk about issues that they did not need to explain to people who had different

opinions. Also, the Internet offered opportunities for those Chinese L2 writers to take a risk with their second language without the fear of being judged as linguistically deficient.

Thorne, Black, and Sykes's (2009) exploration of L2 learning in Internet interest groups and online game reveals the extension of language socialization into advanced and experienced communicative practices and illustrates the salience of creative and critical language use as a means to develop and manage identities. The closed-group tutorial Facebook community in Reid's (2011) research functioned as communicating, relationship building, and experience sharing in an academic-oriented learning group. Reid observed that the closed-group Facebook pages shifted power relations between students and their tutors, provided a platform for students to redesign and negotiate meaning, and let their voice be heard. Also, the closed-group Facebook pages offered students opportunities to practice critical literacies (Luke, 2004, 2014) and electronic literacies (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003a, 2003b) in relation to English composition.

Allen, Crossley, Snow, and McNamara (2014) claimed that game-based L2 writing strategy practices may have the potential to enhance L2 students' writing performance, self-reported engagement, and motivation. Specifically, students constantly interacted with W-Pal, a tutoring system that provided explicit writing strategies displayed through instructional videos and mini-games. This research shows that there was a correlation between L2 learners' attitudes towards the game-based strategies and their perception of writing performance. Allen et al. (2014) concluded that game-based writing strategies led to both increases in writing affect, such as motivation, involvement, perceived performance, and actual writing performance.

Hampel and Hauck's (2006) examination on digitally and multimodally-mediated communication, such as online audio-graphic conferencing of writing tutoring confirms Meskill's (1999) statement that "the engagement of multiple modalities (sight, sound, tactile,

aural) is [...] a highly positive contributing factor for the language learning process” (p. 145). It also confirmed the observation of Lam (2013), Kern (2006, 2015) and Thorne et al. (2009) that computer-mediated language learning helps build a sense of authorship and subjectivity, multiple affiliations, and construct discourse and identity. It also helps learners accumulate linguistic and cultural capital.

### **Chinese ESL Students’ L2 Literacies Development and Identity Negotiation**

#### **Chinese ESL Students’ Identity Negotiation in Multiple Contexts**

Many linguists have paid attention to Chinese immigrant students’ English learning and socialization (Talmy, 2008; Duff, 2002), identity negotiation (Lee, 2008; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Tsui, 1996), and silence in mainstream class (Liu, 2001, 2002; Stevens, 2012) in different contexts. For example, McKay and Wong’s (1996) exploration of L2 learning and multiple identity negotiation of four Chinese adolescents in American high schools highlights the interrelations of discourse, subjectivity, and power relations in multiple social contexts. McKay and Wong identified students as being subjected to multiple discourses, but they were also subjects of discourses, because these L2 learners with agency had strong desires to resist positioning and attempt to reposition themselves. They constantly carried out delicate social and linguistic negotiations to formulate viable identities. Hence, the authors conclude that these L2 learners’ subjectivities were sites of struggle and contestation.

Miller (2000) suggested that self-representation is key to link language and identity. The ways that students represented themselves and were represented in the school setting were tightly related to social interactions and their language socialization and integration into the mainstream contexts. In Miller’s (2000) case study, 13 international students (Chinese students were mainly discussed) attended an intensive ESL program in a high school in Australia. These participants

relied heavily on their first language because of their limited English proficiency. After they moved to a mainstream high school, they had less chance to practice English than they did in the intensive ESL program. These Chinese ESL students all stated that they were positioned as different and Other. The Anglo-Australian students were unwilling to talk to these Chinese students, so a lack of opportunities to speak English both in class and out of class kept them in their ethnic group, which further distanced them from the dominant community.

Miller argued that L2 learners' use of language and socialization through this language aims to enact and represent their identities, but the denial of those Chinese immigrant students' right to participate in the English community of practices silenced them and made their voice unheard. Miller hence suggested that the school needed to make specific connections between "institutional and social practices, social identities, and language resources" (p. 99) to help those linguistic minority students to construct situated identities.

In another study, Miller (2003b) claimed that it is important for ESL students to reach access to interactions with native speakers so that they could make their voice heard and their identities as usable capital. She, therefore, proposed a notion of audibility, which is explained as "speaking loudly enough, and in a variety of the discourses that can be readily understood and acknowledged by other speakers" (p. 312), which requires the cooperation of the speaker and the listener.

Duff's (2002) research on the discourse of a high school class that was comprised of local Canadian students and Chinese immigrant students reveals that Chinese background students relegated themselves and were relegated to passive recipients or a second-class. They were otherized among a big group of local students. These students consciously and unconsciously silenced themselves in class, because they considered silence as the only choice to protect them

from being criticized or ridiculed. Chinese students' interactional withdrawal was seen as "a lack of initiative, agency, or desire to improve one's English or to offer interesting material for the sake of the class" (p. 312). As a result of silence and difference constructed by both native and non-native speakers, alienation, isolation, and failure became a natural situation for those linguistic minority students.

Likewise, Lee's (2008) report on Chinese ESL students at Pacific University showed that those students overtly and covertly were prevented from expressing dissent or critique by classroom discourse, and that students felt marginalized and discriminated. In this regard, Lee made an argument that the classroom can be a site of reproduction of unequal power relations (Bourdieu, 1977b, Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000, 2010; Norton & Tookey, 2004; Liu, 2001, 2002) by constraining students' access to learning resources and opportunities and other powerful identities. Therefore, Lee called for a transformative rethinking of ESL pedagogies and instructions in order to address and challenge hegemonic classroom discourses.

Liu's (2001, 2002) studies on Chinese ESL graduate students' non-participation in oral activities in mainstream classrooms reveal the factors that resulted in those students' unwillingness to classroom involvement. He argued that Chinese ESL students' non-participation in classroom activities is mainly influenced by the intertwined relationships among social, cultural, linguistic, affective, cognitive, and pedagogical parameters. Slightly different from Liu's research on Chinese graduate students in mainstream classroom discourses, Stevens (2012) paid close attention to new arrival Chinese ESL students attending English intensive programs. He found out that limited classroom participation of these students is attributed principally to Chinese cultural influences, such as collectivism-allegiance to a closely-knit circle

of the Chinese group (Bartlett & Fisher, 2011), Confucianism, and the notion of social harmony and familial obligation (Wang, 2016).

### **Chinese ESL Students' Use of Multimodality for L2 Literacies Development**

Research on Chinese ESL students' use of multimodality for L2 literacies and identity development (Lam, 2009a, 2009b, 2013; Nelson, 2006) also draws a lot of attention to this field. Lam (2009a) explores how Chinese immigrant adolescents' transnational affiliation affects their literacies improvement and knowledge construction in the online community of practices across national borders. Two Chinese teenage students of English in the USA were recruited as participants to participate in an online forum that focused on philosophy and global cultures. The examination of transnational online practices related to L1 and L2 literacies development and the use of multilingual and multimedia resources to socialize and construct knowledge.

For example, one of the two participants Kevan used both English and Chinese to navigate different websites to gain resources relevant to Japanese animation and graphic novels (manga). His active participation in discussion on Japanese culture improved his ability to reach dispersed knowledge and linguistic and cultural resources, which helped him practice and develop literacies. A wide range of textual and interactional genres used by different websites like anime and manga facilitated his knowledge construction by the use of specialist varieties of language (Gee, 2004, 2007). For both of the participants, their utilization of multimedia formed transnational online affiliation by involving communities and accessing informational content. The different websites functioned as communities of practices (Gee, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999) offered the two youths with opportunities to access and exchange information, knowledge, resources, and insights into the topics of interest and to configure and re-configure distributed knowledge networks. Therefore, Lam suggested that being literate in

such a globalized, multilingualized, and digitalized society helps hone multiple abilities to think and communicate with others, who come from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and textual artifacts created by those, who are equipped with multiple linguistic skills within distributed knowledge networks.

In another study on digital literacy, Lam (2009b) examined instant messaging (IM) practices of a Chinese adolescent girl, who emigrated from China to America. The analysis of IM exchanges foregrounds the process of cultural and semiotic design through three different affiliations with which she built, including her local Chinese immigrant group, a translocal community of Asian American adolescents, and translational networks with her former classmates or friends in China. By synchronically moving across different life worlds and syncretically using representational resources, the Chinese immigrant girl was able to (re)define her relations to multiple communities in which she practiced digital literacies skills. An important association of her linguistic and literate repertoire with the diverse multicultural and multilingual contexts established by the Chinese adolescent illustrates her multiple identities as well. The digital media like IM along with other modes and communicative contexts constituted a set of multilingual social networks, which benefited her in a number of ways. In conclusion, these two case studies conducted by Lam illuminates the fact that participation in online literacy practices not only builds multiple affiliations with multilingual communities but also helps accumulate digital, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu, 1977b; Lam, 2013).

In Nelson's (2006) study, three Chinese undergraduate L2 learners participated in a digital storytelling project, entitled as multimedia writing. These L2 writers' experience of multimedia text creation shows that digital storytelling may have an amplified effect on meaning making, identity negation, and voicing in terms of resemiotization through repetition, recognition

of language topology, and amplification of authorship. In this research, participants repeatedly used the same image to convey additional meanings, which had defining influences on their emotion-expression and self-reflection. One of the participants in Nelson's (2006) study, Carrie, repeatedly used her parents' image as a symbol to convey different meanings and express her complicated feelings. Her parents' image appeared three times in her digital storytelling, the first two times displayed with the word "parents", the last time with the word "motivation." The image of parents in this piece not only meant love, care, and authority, but also meant motivation displayed as a symbolic expression. The photograph was resemiotized by adding the new meanings. In other words, resemiotization by repetition made additional meanings through both the image and the word. In another student's digital story, an assemblage of Chinese characters was chosen to depict Chinese language varieties and Chinese culture as well as the writer herself. Her agentive voice and intentionality were completely displayed through her digital text.

### **Conclusion: A poststructuralist Perspective of Identity Development When Using Multimodality to Practice L2 Literacies**

In consideration of prior review and argument, the researcher suggests that the relation among sociocultural theory, identity, L2 literacies, and multimodality can be examined from a poststructuralist standpoint of language socialization. L2 literacies practice is a process of language socialization by utilizing multiple modes and tools, in which L2 learners negotiate, interpret, and represent meanings in a way that corresponds to the social position; that is, the individual positions and is positioned in a particular group. L2 literacies practice is regulated by social norms and power relations that guide L2 learners' behaviors and interactions with each other. A poststructuralist perspective of identity development is concerned with understanding how L2 learners socialize to adopt certain discursive norms and conventional forms of interpretation and representation to transform power relations through the use of multimodality.

L2 learners' identity is constructed and reconstructed by participation, interaction, and textual production in which they articulate and position themselves. In this sense, the concept of identity is both social and textual.

In summary, the literature reviewed above highlights the importance of understanding the interactions among language, identity, subjectivity, discourse, and literacies when immigrant ESL learners use English to socialize in multilingual and multicultural communities of practices. While previous research has explored Chinese ESL students' identity negotiation in multiple contexts and through participation in online communities, such as Lam (2009a, 2009b, 2013), Lee (2008), McKay and Wong (1996), Miller (2000, 2003a, 2003b), Nelson (2006), Tsui (1996), there is little attention paid to Chinese ELI students' use multiple modes to construct their multiple identities in an ELI context. Based on the reviewed literature, this research examined how Chinese ELI students at a Southeastern U.S. University might use semiotic resources and digital tools to negotiate their identities through exercising agency and subjectivity.

### **A Brief Review on Methodology**

#### **Research on Data Collection and Data Analysis**

Based on the research questions and literature reviewed above, the researcher conducted an intensive case study (Stake, 1995; Merriam, 1995; Yin, 2009) to explore how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices. The majority of literature on L2 literacies practices, identity negotiation, and multimodality used case studies to understand L2 learners' lived experiences and life stories (Canagarajah, 2003; Duff, 2002; Egbo, 2003; Kress et al., 2001; Lam, 2000, 2009a, 2009b; H, Lee, 2014; L, Lee, 2008; Liu, 2001, 2002; Miller, 2003a, 2003b; Nelson, 2006; Peirce, 1995; Talmy, 2008; Tsui, 1996). In these studies, formal and

informal interviews, field observations and notes, and documents were employed to collect data. The researchers drew on various methods of data analysis to understand identity and L2 learning and literacies practices, including the constant comparative method (Lam, 2000, 2009a, 2009b), discourse analysis (Block, 2007; Duff, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2003a, 2003b; Tsui, 1996), narrative analysis (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000), rhetorical analysis (Canagarajah, 2003), and semiotic analysis (Ajayi, 2008, 2009). According to the literature, the researcher used the constant comparative method to analyze the interview transcripts by inducting and interpreting codes, cross-comparing codes, and triangulating across data (Charmaz, 2006; Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). Also, she capitalized on discourse analysis to analyze WeChat (Chinese Facebook or Twitter) exchanges to understand how Chinese ELI students interacted with each other, how they positioned themselves when they practiced L2 literacies in a smartphone network-mediated community. In addition, she followed Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw's (2011) suggestions on analyzing field notes to look for recurring patterns and themes when she studied class observation notes.

### **Research on Translating Transcripts**

Translating participants' voices in interviews has been "one of the biggest challenges faced by cross-cultural researchers" (Esposito, 2001, p. 573). The process of translation is extremely complex because of linguistic, cultural, and individual differences. Language translation in data collection involves an active and complex process of re-interpretation and meaning negotiation (Larson, 1998), which includes initial data in participants' first language, the translator's conceptualization of the data and her understanding of the meaning, the translator's re-expression of the meaning, and the interpretation of translation. It is impossible to avoid misinterpretation during the process of translation. However, there are many ways to

minimize misunderstanding, misconception, and misinterpretation, such as meaning-based translation (Larson, 1998), a combination of linguistic equivalence, conceptual equivalence, and dynamic equivalence (Neuman, 2011; Nida, 1969; Piazzoli, 2015; Squire, 2009), and making translation visible and through open dialogue (Wong & Poon, 2010). In Piazzoli's (2015) research, three approaches were discussed in detail, including linguistic equivalence (focus on literal meanings) (Kenny, 2009; Squire, 2009), conceptual equivalence (focus on similarities of ideas or concepts in two languages) (Neuman, 2011), and dynamic equivalence (focus on the sounding based on the target language) (Nida, 1969). Piazzoli (2015) claimed that data translation needs to combine the three approaches. Also, the roles of translators should be taken into consideration. If a translator is familiar with or able to understand the research topic and research context, he or she should be favored. With these concerns in mind, Piazzoli invited one native speaker of Italian who lived in an English-speaking country for twelve years to translate interview transcripts back into English from Italian for data analysis. She also invited two experienced professional translators to pilot and proof-read the translations. Even though the process of data translation was complicated, time-consuming, and demanding, it increased data trustworthiness.

Another case in point is McKay and Wong's (1996) study on Chinese students' identity negotiation in various discourses; two Chinese-speaking researchers who were fluent in English conducted all the interviews with these Chinese participants. Their bicultural backgrounds and bilingual skills not only helped negotiate relationships with the participants and elicit culturally specific knowledge and information, but also helped capture subtleties in the participants' self-representation and interactions. Miller (2003b) also used the same approach in her case study. She stated,

[the] Chinese-speaking students, who spoke Mandarin, Cantonese or both, had far more limited English, and so interviews in their languages conducted by native-speaking research assistants, who then also translated the transcripts. These were then cross-checked with other native speakers. (p. 298)

Based on the literature, the researcher in this study combined the multiple ways of translating interview transcripts to increase validity and trustworthiness of data, such as inviting a proof-reader who was an expert in both English and Chinese, to verify the researcher's translations, using meaning-based translation, and making translation visible through open conversations with the proof-reader. Chapter III will address the methodological issues including data collection, data analysis, and data translation in detail.

CHAPTER III:  
METHODOLOGY: AN INTENSIVE CASE STUDY

**Overview**

This study explored how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices. The previous chapter reviewed relevant literature on sociocultural theory, second language socialization, L2 learners' identity negotiation, and a relationship between multimodality and L2 literacies, which provided insights into second language socialization and identity development. It also briefly reviewed methods of data collection and analysis. This chapter focuses on methodology, including the research philosophy, the case study design (Stake, 1995), data collection and data analysis, researcher's positioning, and the trustworthiness of this inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Philosophical Position: Symbolic Interactionism**

Rooted in anthropology and sociology, qualitative inquiry requires broader and deeper understandings of humans' lives and lived experiences within a specific social, historical, and cultural context. The key concept of qualitative research aims to interpret experience and reality, which resonates with Merriam's (2002) idea that "meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world" (p. 3). This current study identifies symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) as its philosophical foundation to understand Chinese international students' L2 learning, literacies development, and identity negotiation when they make meanings of their English learning experience in an ELI setting. Symbolic interactionism relies on three premises:

(1) Humans interact with things that have meanings for them, in which things can be physical objects, human beings, institutions, activities, and situations that people encounter in their everyday life; (2) the meaning results from social interactions; (3) the meanings are modified through interpretative processes when interactions occur. Symbolic interactionism views meaning as deriving from the process of interaction between individuals and their social contexts.

One of the indications of symbolic interactionism is that “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2), so it is necessary for qualitative researchers to identify the things and their meaning. Since “human interaction is mediated by the use of symbols, by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another’s actions” (Blumer, 1969, p. 79), language is a main means for humans to interact and communicate with each other. Further, symbolic interactionism holds that the society is the product of symbolic interaction in which the situated actors perceive and interpret the world in and through interaction with themselves and with other people. In addition, symbolic interactionism contends that people interpret actions of each other in a situated and interactive relation to their surroundings. The features of symbolic interactionism are in alignment with ethnography that aims to understand humans’ interaction with each other and their culture in which they reside by presenting sociocultural interpretations (Merriam, 2002; Wolcott, 1999).

A researcher’s worldview and beliefs influence considerably his or her selection of research methodologies. Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism helps qualitative researchers better understand the physical and social world. For example, Corbin and Strauss (2008) believe that the world is complex, ambiguous, and evincing change, because it is created and recreated by interaction in which new meanings are produced and old ones are altered and/or maintained.

They go one step further to point out that human action, and interaction with events or problems, displays great varieties, which in turn shapes and changes the surrounding world, because human beings are active agents who engage in meaning making and interpreting, relying on use of language. The construction of action, social and subjective meanings, human agency, and emergent processes are central to Corbin and Strauss's (2008) research. Human action and interaction are based on shared perspectives or negotiated meanings, which contribute to the complexity, variety, and ambiguity of humans' experience and reality. In this sense, the researcher's interpretation of one's experiences and interactions must be located within a social, cultural, political, and technological framework.

Charmaz (2006) also embraced Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism. She claimed that "society, reality, and self are constructed through interaction and thus rely on language and communication" (p. 7). Since humans' interaction is inherently complicated, dynamic, and interpretive, it is essential for qualitative researchers to address how one creates, enacts, and changes meanings and actions in a social world. Similar to Corbin and Strauss's (2008) understanding of symbolic interactionism, Charmaz (2006) contended that people actively participate in social action and interaction as transformative thinkers and agents. She used symbolic interactionism as a theoretical framework to inform her research on identity goals. The identity goals are realized by creating meanings and acting purposefully as people "interpret their experiences and interact within the world" (p. 170).

Patton (2015) also suggested that symbolic interactionism helps qualitative researchers to understand how people perceive, understand, and interpret actions, interactions, and the world. Humans communicate and interact with each other through use of modes, signs, and symbols to make meanings, which mirrors Kegan's (1982) notion that "[being] a person is the activity of

meaning-making” (p. 11). Based on symbolic interactionism, Patton argued that qualitative inquiry is to understand how humans make and construct meaning, how to evaluate meaning making, what objects or symbols mean, and how to determine what is meaningful. In other words, qualitative interpretation is an act of meaning making, in which researchers interpret interviews, observations, artifacts, journals, and other documents to find recurring patterns and meaningful themes.

As a philosophical foundation, symbolic interactionism is tightly tied to the theoretical framework of this study. Derived from sociocultural theory, language socialization, multimodality, and L2 literacies, the theoretical framework of this research foregrounds interaction and interpretation embedded and organized in social and cultural meaning systems, to understand the complexity of language learning and use when language learners participate in a community of practices by employing various modes (Duff, 2000, 2007; Gumperz, 1982; Gumperz & Hymes, 1972; Hymes, 1972, 1980; Kern, 2000; Kress, 2003; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978; Watson-Gegeo & Nielsen, 2003; Wenger, 1999). L2 learners utilize language, signs, symbols, digital tools, and other semiotic forms to negotiate meanings (mainly in the form of speaking, reading, and writing) in order to reach the goal of communication and representation, which squares with the core of symbolic interactionism. L2 learners integrate language and other social practices to take identified and identifiable roles in a cultural and social group (Gee, 2012; Lam, 2000; Lankshear & Knobel, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999). In taking such roles L2 learners seek to interpret others’ acts and actions in which the individual “forms and aligns his own action on the basis of such interpretation of the acts of others” (Blumer, 1969, p. 82), such as native speakers and non-native speakers, newcomers and old-timers, and digital natives and digital immigrants (Lankshear & Knobel, 2006),

to construct and co-construct new knowledge. Accordingly, symbolic interactionism lays a solid philosophical foundation for this study to view and understand complexities and particularities of Chinese international students' use of symbols, modes, and digital tools to study English and develop their multiple identities.

Anchored in symbolic interactionism and informed by sociocultural theory, language socialization, multimodality, and L2 literacies, this research used an intensive case study (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009) to understand how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices.

### **Research Design: An Intensive Case Study**

Inspired by symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969) and the application of ethnography research on L2 acquisition, socialization and identity negotiation (Duff, 2002; Lam, 2000; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2003a, 2003b; Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2001; Toohey, 2000), the researcher drew on an intensive case study (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 1998; 2002; Stake, 1995; Wolcott, 1992, 1999; Yin, 2009) to understand the complexities and particularities of Chinese international students' English learning experience and identity negotiation.

### **Case Study: Looks at the Particular and Complexities**

To capture and understand the particularities and complexities of L2 learning, literacies development, and identity transformation, the researcher of this study selected three Chinese international students as a unit of analysis to conduct an intensive case study investigation. The case study approach holds the potential to answer the research questions according to its numerous advantages:

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon; Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of phenomena;

It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers' experiences. (Merriam, 1998, p. 41)

In addition, case study concentrates on analyzing complex and unique cases that happened in a certain place during a certain time (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 2005; Yin, 2009). Stake (1995) contended that case study aims to optimize understanding through answering targeted and selected questions, and focuses on using experiential knowledge to dig out the principles underlying the phenomena being studied within certain social and physical contexts. Central to case study is to probe particularities and complexities through in-depth describing, interpreting and explaining data that provide researchers, participants, and readers with opportunities to learn the world. In short, case study is to look at the particular (Candlin & Sarangi, 2003).

Even though the case study methodology focuses on tiny, singular, and unique events or instances, it opens a large window for qualitative researchers to think and rethink, and interpret and reinterpret human lives. The case study methodology makes it possible for qualitative researchers to immerse themselves in the participant or actor's life to build knowledge of reality through a series of social interactions between the researcher and the researched. In this sense, case study is a process of knowledge co-construction in which researchers play the role as a vehicle to help participants tell their stories, which entails a fusion of emic and etic perspectives (Candlin & Sarangi, 2003).

The use of case study to conduct this research also manifested the researcher's epistemological orientation as a novice inquirer. More importantly, this study lent itself to a case study inquiry, because this methodology allowed the researcher to investigate complex units of

analysis, offered her opportunities to garner rich information, and helped her gain insights into participants' lived experience in order to illuminate meanings. By exploiting thick description (Geertz, 1973) and thick explanation (Watson- Gegeo, 1992), this case study answered these research questions: 1) how did these Chinese ELI students interact with multiple modes and tools to negotiate their identities while practicing L2 literacies skills; and 2) to what extent did multimodality influence these Chinese ELI students' identity construction and reconstruction?

### **Researcher Reflexivity**

According to Blumer's (1969) symbolic interactionism, conducting a qualitative study is a process of knowledge production and co-production by the sustained and intensive interaction between the researcher and the researched, which might cause ethical and personal issues. To deal with these concerns, researchers need to "explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, that may shape their interpretations formed during a study" (Creswell, 2009, p. 177), which resonates with Bourdieu's (1977a) advocacy of "reflexive sociology." Reflexivity enhances self-awareness and helps build researchers' distance from the participants. Qualitative researchers should also reflect on interactions between the researchers themselves, research participants, research sites, and research proceedings (Glesne, 2010). The reflection includes "examining one's personal and theoretical commitments to see how they serve as resources for generating particular data, for behaving in particular ways... for developing particular interpretations" (Schwandt 1997, p. 136). In other words, the researcher always needs to ask questions about subjectivity, the methodological techniques, and concerns about data collection, interpretations, and representations to ensure accuracy, legitimacy, and the validity of a project. The role of the researcher and her sensitivity to the emic and etic perspectives are essential to the scope and

solidity of scientific knowledge production and recreation (Heath & Street, 2008; Woolgar, 1988). Since the qualitative researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 1998, 2002; Patton, 1990), it is impossible to escape subjectivity, but explaining the role of the researcher in detail functions as a methodological caution that can diminish bias (Agar, 1980). As a response to researchers' reflexivity and positioning, the following section explains the investigator's roles in this inquiry. The researcher's role was multilayered: a case study researcher as outsider and insider, evaluator and interpreter, resource provider, and friend and consultant (Candlin & Sarangi, 2003; Glesne, 2010; Stake, 1995).

### **Researcher's Roles**

#### **Researcher as Insider and Outsider**

Born in China and formed by traditional Chinese culture, the investigator of this research shared the same ethnicity, language, culture, and tradition with her participants. Also, the researcher shared the experience of L2 learning, cultural adaptation and linguistic enrichment, and social transition to the host culture with her participants, which not only helped the researcher build rapport with them, but also provided the researcher with privileges to elicit details of participants' lived experience and life stories (Best, 2003). The insider status served as an instrument for the researcher to better understand the discourse, culture, and atmosphere of the research field, which laid a solid intellectual and methodological foundation for the researcher to generate insights into the proceedings of the research.

Even though an insider role provided a platform for the researcher to "get to the heart of the matter" (Wolcott, 1999, p. 137), the researcher positioned herself as an outsider in terms of the researcher role. As a full-time doctoral student, the researcher's focus was on research, which was different from what the participants experienced every day. In addition, the researcher was

much older than the participants, who were called “digital natives,” because they were born with new technology and multimedia (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003a, 2003b), but the researcher was a “digital immigrant.” The researcher’s position of an outsider resonated with Wolcott’s (1999) observation that “outsider status refers to an orientation, not to a membership” (p. 137). This outsider role kept the researcher aware of her verbal and nonverbal behavior (Glesne, 2010) as she was in the research setting. This role also allowed her to listen carefully to her participants’ L2 learning experience and life stories. Moreover, the outsider’s perspective helped the researcher to reflect dispassionately on all the proceedings and findings of the investigation.

The position of insider and outsider was parallel to the interpretation of “experience-near” and “experience-distant” (Geertz, 1983), which oriented the researcher to look for “a deeper immersion in other’s worlds in order to grasp what they experience as meaningful and important” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 2). On the other hand, the experience-distant position kept her awareness of her basic role as a case study researcher who conducted the inquiry. The insider and outsider role assisted the researcher in reaching a balance between the emic perspective and etic perspective, subjectivity and objectivity, and the participants’ meaning making and the researcher’s interpretation.

### **Researcher as Biographer and Interpreter**

The researcher acted as a biographer to help her participants tell their English learning experience within a phase of life to illustrate and understand actions and interactions. The purpose of this study was to discover how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices, so biography offered the researcher a provocative model (Stake, 1995). The researcher also served as an interpreter, because once she recognized a problem, she studied it and strove to

connect it with known things. For example, she made new connections and explained how the findings in this research differed from what the previous research indicated. Based on Stake's (1995) understanding of case study researchers who are "[agents] of new interpretation, new knowledge, but also new illusion" (p. 99), the researcher facilitated readers' understanding of what she represented as a biographer.

### **Researcher as Resource Provider**

According to Candlin and Sarangi (2003), researchers' contribution to the professional practice in the research field is an invaluable resource to "reveal the multiple truths apparent in others' lives" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 3). When she was conducting a former study at the ELI setting two years ago (the same research site as that of her dissertation), the researcher worked as a language translator to help her participants and their teachers understand each other in class. She explained her participants' English learning strategies and preferences to their instructors to help them meet the needs of these English learners. She also provided her participants learning materials and gave them suggestions on how to improve listening and speaking. In addition, she told stories about American culture and tradition to her participants to improve their cultural enrichment. The experience she gained before was beneficial for her to play a better role in providing resources for her participants in this dissertation study.

### **Researcher as Friend and Consultant**

In addition to providing resources to participants, the researcher functioned as a friend who encouraged her participants to "develop their ideas in their formulations in ways which they have not previously established" (Candlin & Sarangi, 2003, p. 279), such as the conversation during interviews can stimulate the participants to invent and concretize thoughts and perspectives, which did not fully form until they were established during the interviews. A

supportive friendship in a case study inquiry not only encouraged the researcher to create methodological strategies, but also helped the researched tell their real stories, because “a relaxed and unselfconscious interviewer puts respondents at ease” (Fielding, 1993, p. 139). Also, the experience the researcher gained from her former study with Chinese ELI students enabled her to function as a consultant to help these participants deal with difficulties in academic and daily life.

### **The Research Site**

The research site of this study was located in a Southeastern U. S. University, which housed more than 30,000 students and offered bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in more than 200 fields of study. The number of international students at this university had dramatically increased in recent years, making up 3.8% of the total population of students with Chinese students being the most plentiful (information from its website). To facilitate English improvement of ESL learners, the ELI at this university offered a year-round, 6-level Intensive English Program (Reading/Writing, Speaking/Listening, and Structure) for students with limited English proficiency. Full time students took 20 hours per week for core classes (basic language skills development), 2-4 hours for Culturally Speaking activity (offered in spring and fall), and Friday Afternoon Seminars. The core classes were divided into six sessions a year and each session lasted eight weeks (in spring and fall) or six weeks (in summer). In the summer, there were two sessions, including Summer I (from May to June) and Summer II (from June to July). There were 26 English instructors at the ELI, all of whom had master’s degrees in TESOL and some of whom lived and taught overseas in the past.

## Participants

The selection of participants followed the notion of purposive sampling, that of “[selecting] a sample from which the most can be learned” (Merriam, 2002, p. 12) and choosing information-rich cases (Patton, 1990) to look at the complexities and particularities (Candlin & Sarangi, 2003). To answer the research questions, the criteria for selecting participants were as follows: participants 1) were Chinese undergraduate students from mainland China (aged 19-25); 2) had studied at the ELI for less than a year; 3) encountered English challenges; 4) were users of multiple modes of communication and technological tools; and 5) were willing to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions on their English learning and identity negotiation (Merriam, 1998).

The researcher contacted all ELI instructors and sought permission to contact their Chinese students who attended the intensive and extensive English program during the session of Summer I of 2016 (from May 10 to June 20). After obtaining Chinese ELI students’ contact information (e.g., email addresses or phone numbers according to their convenience and preferences), the researcher invited four participants to meet in a classroom at the ELI for a pre-study meeting, including three male students: Danny, Lihua, and Hongjun, and one female student, Desiree (She quit participating in this research before the first interview due to her busy schedule) (see Table 1 for participant profiles).

Table 1

*Three Chinese ELI Students' Profiles*

Name	Age	Gender	Education	English Level	Projected Major	Stay in US
Danny	21	male	freshman	4, 4, 5	marketing	4 months
Lihua	19	male	high school	5, 5, 5	civil engineering	4 months
Hongjun	19	male	high school	6, 6, 6	unknown	8 months

At the meeting, the researcher introduced the purpose and process of the current study to the participants. To help the participants better understand this study, the researcher distributed handouts with a detailed timeline and the procedure of data collection, including numbers of interviews and class observations, length and places of each interview. The researcher shared instructions for taking part in a discussion on WeChat (Chinese Facebook or Twitter). The WeChat discussion took place in the beginning of May, 2016 until the beginning of June, 2016. The pre-study meeting lasted about half an hour. After the participants were familiar with the study, the participants signed the consent form.

**Data Collection**

Data for this inquiry consisted of four sources: (1) formal and informal interviews. (Kvale, 2015; Seidman, 2013); (2) class observations (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990; Spradley, 1980; Wolcott, 1992) and field notes when she observed all the classes; 3) WeChat exchanges; and 4) researcher's reflexive journal entries. The following section explained the four data sources in detail.

## **Formal and Informal Interviews**

The predominant source of data collection was formal and informal interviews. A formal interview, called a structured interview, gathered common sociodemographic information such as age, gender, educational background and so forth (Merriam, 1998). An informal interview, similar to conversations with purposes (Dexter, 2006), aimed to figure out what is “in and on someone else’s mind” (Patton, 1990, p. 278). The researcher combined formal and informal interviews to gather rich data (see Appendices J, K, and L).

Asking meaningful questions was central to interviews. Strauss, Schatzman, Bucher, and Sabshin (1981) recommended four kinds of questions that could stimulate responses from participants, which included hypothetical questions, devil’s advocate questions, ideal position questions, and interpretive questions. Similarly, Patton (1990) suggested that presupposition questions may inspire and encourage interviewees to reflect on the things that happened before or on people with whom they dealt. Keeping these strategies for asking meaningful questions in mind, the researcher in this study generated 23 interview questions based on the research questions. These questions were related to participants’ Chinese names, keepsakes, interactions with native and non-native speakers, the use of multiple modes and tools, and formal and informal English learning experiences in different communities after they came to the United States. The researcher aimed to explore how they developed their identities in communities of L2 practices mediated by multiple modes and tools.

The researcher conducted three interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted about one hour. The total amount of time for the interviews lasted nine hours. The first interview for each participant took place on May 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix J), which was before the class observations. The second interview occurred on May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix K),

which was used in conjunction with class observations and data analysis of the first interview and WeChat exchanges to obtain fresh perspectives and probe further insights about influences of multiple modes and tools on identity negotiation. The third interview happened on June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 26<sup>th</sup> (see Appendix L). The interview questions were generated from the data analysis of the second interview and WeChat exchanges. The researcher scheduled all the interviews according to participants' convenience and preference. All the interviews were conducted in participants' first language (Chinese), because first of all, the participants felt comfortable talking in Chinese (Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003; Lam, 2000; H, Lee, 2014; McKay & Wong, 1996). Secondly, it was easy for participants to express themselves since English was their second language. Also, interviewing in Chinese conferred the researcher's insider status (Lam, 2000, 2004; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2003b). The researcher tape-recorded all the interviews and transcribed them in Chinese immediately after the interviews.

### **Translating Interview Transcripts**

Based on the literature on translating interview transcripts, the researcher employed multiple ways to minimize misunderstanding and misinterpretation. The researcher's knowledge about English and Chinese cultural background helped increase trustworthiness of the interview data. Before translating the researcher listened to all the tapes carefully and transcribed them into written texts in Chinese. After sending them to all the participants to check if the researcher understood their stories correctly, the researcher started translating the Chinese transcripts into English. Also, the researcher invited a Chinese American professor who taught linguistics at this university to proof-read all the interview transcripts including the Chinese versions and English versions. This professor's bicultural and bilingual backgrounds also increased the transparency and validity of the interview data. In addition, the researcher participated in the activity of cross-

checking proof-reader. The researcher asked the participants to do member-checks three times to ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data.

### **Class Observations and Field Notes**

The class observation (Merriam, 2002; Patton, 1990) was another primary source of data, because 1) it offered the researcher first-hand experience with participants by recording activities and happenings on the research site (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2002), such as their seating and participation in class interactions mediated by smartphones and other tools and modes; 2) it informed the researcher about the appropriate field to investigate and helped build sound research-researched rapport (Glesne, 2010); 3) it provided context information and knowledge, specific incidents, and behaviors, which were used as references for following interviews (Merriam, 2002); and 4) it also helped the researcher “glean insights on significant moments in interaction” (Erikson, 1992, p. 203). In brief, entering into a research site to be part of the site (Patton, 1990), the researcher observed and intuited what was going on in the class (Merriam, 2002) to map out a holistic picture of her participants’ language learning experience (see Appendix I). By conducting class observations, the researcher explored how these Chinese ELI students interacted with various modes and tools to make meanings; how they participated in class activities; how they interacted with their instructors, their non-Chinese international classmates, and their Chinese classmates through using multimodality; how they positioned themselves and how they were positioned by their instructors and their peers. To answer these questions, the researcher observed the class of listening and speaking for 1.20 hours, reading and writing for 2.15 hours, and structure for 1.30 hours for each participant. The researcher visited Danny’s speaking and listening class twice, because this class was divided into two sessions. Hence the total amount of time for the class observation was 15.15 hours.

The researcher took field notes including a diagram of the layout of the setting, verbal descriptions of the participants and activities, direct quotations of what participants said, and researcher's comments in the margins of the field notes. The researcher's comments recorded her thoughts about the research setting, the participants, and their interactions with their teachers, and their peers. According to Yin (1989), field notes are an essential data base of a case study, which is in line with Fetterman's (1989) observation that emic perspective is "at the heart of most ethnographic research" (p. 30). In addition, field notes mirror the field experience and reflect on the research methodology (Spradley, 1979). The field notes transform observation, thinking, analysis, and interpretation into a written text, which is a prerequisite for thick description (Geertz, 1973). In this sense, field notes should be "descriptive, concrete, and detailed" (Patton, 1990, p. 241). With these concerns in mind, the researcher wrote down notes as much as she could when she observed the class activities and other interactions. She also documented her comments on her emotions, interactions, and initial perceptions and interpretations when she worked in the research field.

### **WeChat Exchanges**

WeChat exchanges served as another predominant source of data in this inquiry, which were significant for the researcher to gain more information about the participants' English learning details including their learning strategies, experiences, thoughts, opinions, encounters, emotions, feelings, reflections and so forth to explore how multimodality influenced these participants' identity negotiation. To reach this goal, the researcher requested the participants to form a discussion group on WeChat. Each member of the discussion group exchanged their opinions on one topic sent to WeChat by a leading discussant. Each one had opportunities to take turns to lead discussions. The researcher collected 26 WeChat exchanges, which were related to

five topics, including education, testing, virtual reality, language and culture, and learning English in daily life (see Appendix D). Each participant followed at least one posting for each topic. The participants used English to chat with each other, because learning English is to socialize through the use of English and socialize to use English to take on new identities (Block, 2006; Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991, Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

### **Researcher's Reflection**

Since a qualitative researcher is the main instrument of data collection and data analysis, a research project can be divided into two parts: one is about the research topic, the other is about the researcher herself (Reason, 1994). This perspective can be explained based on the view of Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater (2002), who argue that “[any] study of ‘an other’ is also a study of ‘a self’ (xiii). Again, according to Blumer’s (1969) symbolic interactionism, it is fundamental to reflect upon the interplay between the participants and the researcher herself to understand “how research relationships influence fieldwork and interpretation” (Glesne, 2010). Following this observation on research, the researcher wrote her personal reflection journal from the first day of the field work until the end of this investigation to document and reflect on her subjectivity, emotion work, positions, and positionality (Glesne, 2010). The reflective journal detailed everyday events, and her personal feelings, thoughts, and impressions in relation to those events. This traced her development and biases during the investigation. By tracing her subjective self and inquiring into its origins and history, the researcher was aware of her own perspectives, understood the questions derived from her perspectives, and made interpretations of interactions within the research field. In brief, the researcher used the four methods including interviews, class observations and field notes, WeChat exchanges, and researcher’s reflection to collect holistic and rich data.

## **Data Analysis**

The goal of data analysis in an intensive case study was to communicate understanding and explore complexities and particulars, drawing on data from interviews, field observations, and WeChat exchanges. Methods of data analysis in this research were involved in the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2013; Merriam, 1998) for analyzing interview transcripts, discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972; Gee, 2011, 2012; Glesne, 2011; Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002; Kvale, 2015) and content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) for analyzing WeChat exchanges, and coding and memoeing for analyzing field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011).

### **Constant Comparative Method for Analyzing Interview Data**

The constant comparative method established analytic distinctions by making comparisons at each level of data analysis, comparing data with data to find similarities and differences. It allowed for the researcher to “differentiate one category /theme from another and to identify properties and dimensions specific to that category/ theme” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 73). The researcher used this method to analyze interview transcripts for the three cases, which took place for three steps to categorize, summarize, and analyze data. In the first step of constant comparison, the researcher read all the interview transcripts thoroughly and marked important statements and incidents in colors in the data. The researcher read line by line and revisited the marked parts in order to develop codes and categories (see Appendix H). In the second step, the researcher formed a data table including direct quotes, codes, and the analysis derived from the transcripts. The third step included interpretation of the codes and analysis according to former literature and relevant theories to identify themes or properties. During this process of coding, the researcher compared interview statements within the same interview, compared statements in

different interviews, and compared data in the first interview, second interview, and the third interview of the same individuals (Charmaz, 2006, p. 54) to generate new theories.

### **Discourse Analysis and Content Analysis for Analyzing WeChat Exchange Data**

The purpose of discourse analysis was to study “how language is used to create, maintain, and destroy different social bonds and is in line with the postmodern perspective on the human world as socially and linguistically constructed” (Kvale, 2015, p. 226). The researcher used discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2011) and content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) (see Appendix G) to explore what and how these participants interacted with each other in a mode of text on WeChat to fashion textual selves in a smartphone, network-mediated community of L2 practice; how they positioned and were positioned in this small discussion group; how they interacted with each other in terms of the way they used English and turn-taking to gain purposeful, identifiable, and identified membership of this community of practice. The researcher collected all the written texts, their head icons, and emoticons (see Appendix D) sent to WeChat to analyze the data word by word and line by line. She explored how the participants used the five elements of discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2012) including prosody, cohesion, overall discourse organization, contextualization signals, and the semantic organization of the written text to negotiate meanings (Blumer, 1969), reinforced or transformed power relations (Bourdieu & Thompson 1991; Foucault, 1972), and developed a sense of self (Weedon, 1987; Norton, 1997, 2000, 2010; Peirce, 1995). For example, by reading the WeChat discussion exchanges, the researcher asked: What was the participant’s topic? Why did he select this topic? How did he respond to others in terms of the content and language use, like hedges and registers? How did the participant use a certain piece of text to connect to another? How did this participant use certain words or sentences to enact his identities and also help others recognize him as a

legitimate group member? How did others react and interact with this participant? In brief, the researcher investigated the relations among language, literacies, power, position, and identity by conducting discourse analysis and content analysis of WeChat discussions.

### **Close Reading, Open Coding, and Writing Memos for Analyzing Field Note Data**

The goal of analyzing field notes in this research was to produce coherent and focused analysis of participants' English learning experiences, so the researcher identified threads that could be knitted together to tell stories after reading through all the field notes. She elaborated and refined the earlier comments and insights of analysis by closely and intensively analyzing the field notes. Specifically, the researcher conducted open coding and focused coding and wrote memos to examine how these participants interacted with their instructors and their classmates in different classes to negotiate viable and ideal identities when studying English in the ELI setting; how they perceived and positioned themselves when they participated in class activities by using multiple modes and tools; how they changed themselves to fit with the target language community; where they sat in a classroom; why they sat with Chinese classmates or other non-Chinese internationals all the time; how they performed in the same ethnic group or in the mixed group. To answer these questions, the researcher read the field notes line by line to identify and develop ideas and themes. Also, she named, distinguished, and identified significance of particular data and generated as many codes as possible for the later analysis.

While coding and reviewing the initial memos, the researcher elaborated these ideas and insights by writing "systematic theoretical code memos (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). These memos were helpful for the researcher to identify and develop the core processes that characterized the participants' participation, engagement, and interaction in class activities. After identifying and formulating any ideas and themes, the researcher refined the topics that had been

identified to select promising themes and try to work out possible connections to identify a set of core themes. By making constant comparisons across the data, the researcher integrated and related separate pieces of data into analytic themes and categories to explore the relations between coded field notes by writing integrative memos. In short, the process of close reading, open coding, and writing memos was to connect field note excerpts and the conceptual themes in order to tell the participants' English learning stories.

In conclusion, these three participants as three units of analysis were analyzed step by step. The researcher read all the data line by line repeatedly from interview transcripts, field notes, WeChat exchanges, and her reflective journal entries, noting words or phrases that seemed relevant to the purpose of the study. In addition, the researcher analyzed memos based on analyzing all the data and triangulating and crystalizing the emerged themes and patterns by relying on multiple data sources. She constantly compared interview transcripts with field notes, WeChat exchanges, and her personal reflexive journals to look for congruence and correspondence between the data so that she was able to include them into categorized themes and concepts. The coding process was cyclical in which data were coded and recoded over and over again: data to code, code to category, category to code, code to category, and category to data (Saldaña, 2009). Thirdly, the researcher invited all the participants to verify and confirm the researcher's understanding of their life stories by reading the final analytical memos to ensure that the researcher interpreted their experience correctly and appropriately. Figure 2 shows the procedure of data collection and analysis.

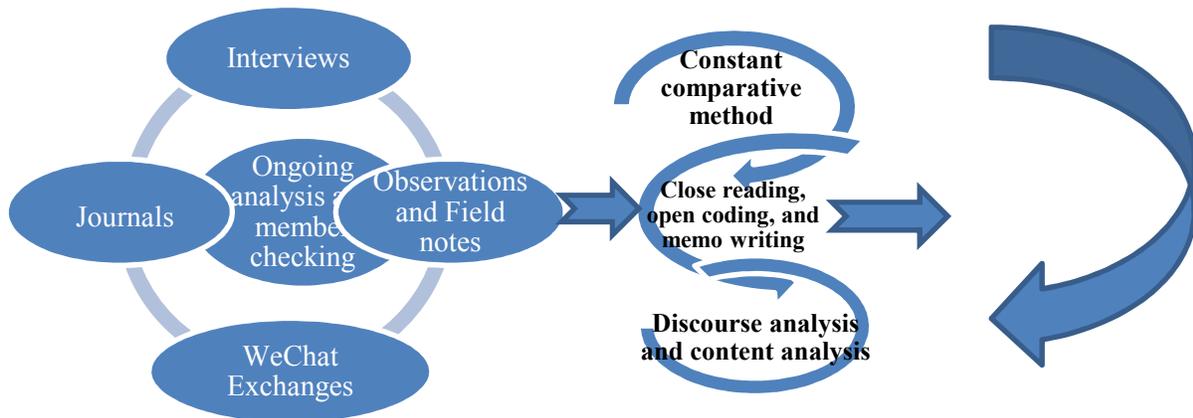


Figure 2. The procedure of data collection and data analysis

### **Data Rigor and Trustworthiness**

It is extremely important for case study researchers to ensure trustworthiness and validity by continuously engaging and persistently observing in the field to build trust with participants, learn the culture, and check for misconception (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). In this research, the researcher established rapport with her participants to increase validation and vitality of data. Additionally, she used multiple sources and methods to triangulate the data in order to shed light on perspectives (Patton, 1990). Again, the researcher brought her participants the copies of interview transcripts, her final codes, and analytical memos to ask them to reflect on the accuracy of the description and written analysis as well as what was misunderstood and what was missing, because case study is the interpretation of interpretation (Yin, 2009). The participants played a critical role directing and acting in this case study research, so it was essential to elicit their observations and/ or interpretations (Stake, 1995). Further, the researcher's own reflexive journal also helped her to mitigate the influence of her subjectivity in this research. It was significant to critically reflect on and record how the researcher, her participants, the research setting, and research proceedings interacted with each other from

embarking on the inquiry to presenting the findings (Glesne, 2010) to make the project more legitimate and valid. In the process of writing reflective journals the researcher tracked, questioned, and shared experience in which she shaped and was shaped by the whole inquiry process.

### **Ethical Considerations**

A case study researcher must not only abide by ethical codes, but also follow certain social norms and rules when conducting an inquiry, including a respect for participants and protecting their rights. Also, the participants were informed of checking transcriptions and written memos and reports, which considered their rights, interests, and wishes and ensures the accuracy and appropriateness of the description.

### **Summary**

This chapter addressed the philosophical and methodological framework of this inquiry and its role in the research design, which included details of research sites and participant selection, data collection and analysis, and the trustworthiness and ethical considerations of this investigation.

CHAPTER IV:  
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY DATA

**Overview**

The purpose of this study was to discover how Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to make meanings and negotiate their identities when they participated in L2 literacies practices. Chapter IV presents the introduction to the study data, including the context of the study and rapport building, participants' profiles, and a brief statement of the WeChat discussion group.

**The Context of the Study and Rapport Building**

**An Introduction to the ELI Setting**

The English Language Institute (ELI) at this university offers pathway programs for international students with limited English proficiency to practice and enhance English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. The ELI has high quality programs, which are accredited by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation. The ELI is also a member of University & College Intensive English Programs and English USA. The mission of ELI is to help students to meet their diverse and multiple needs by engaging them in linguistic enrichment and cultural adaptation. Specifically, it customizes programs upon request for individuals and groups that have special needs, such as academic development, professional requirements, travel, and daily life. The ELI has built a friendly, comfortable, inclusive, and stimulating English learning environment for English learners to socialize through English in order to gain a good command of English. It also provides English learners with opportunities to experience

American culture and tradition to raise awareness of cultural diversity and improve acculturation (ELI website, 2016).

The research setting is full of multilingualism and multiculturalism. On one side of the wall in the ELI hallway, there is a large picture that represents languages and cultures of all the students; on the other side of the hall, there are many flyers that announce local cultural activities and events sponsored by the university and other organizations, which offer international students chances to not only practice English and learn about the local culture and tradition, but also to develop a sense of place and community. Figure 3 displays the cultural and linguistic acceptance and inclusiveness of the ELI.



*Figure 3.* A glimpse of the ELI hallway

The ELI setting is the place where the researcher observed the participants' classes, including speaking and listening, reading and writing, and structure. Each classroom is equipped with a computer, a projector, and a large screen TV. Many pictures are hung on the three walls in all the classrooms to symbolize diverse cultures and languages. There is a language lab at the ELI for students to practice L2 literacies skills in. A special routine activity titled "Culturally Speaking" takes place in the lab. Students can obtain all kinds of English tutoring in the lab as well.

## **Building Rapport with Participants**

The researcher's relationship with her participants shapes the nature of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1999); therefore, power relations and social distance directly influence building rapport and trust with participants. Social distance might result in a lack of understanding and cooperation. Participants may be unwilling to share their English learning stories or remain silent or disguise the truth. Also, unequal power relations between the researcher and her participants might cause resistance to truth telling. Even though the participants shared many similarities with the researcher in terms of culture, language, and ethnicity, there are many differences, such as age, family upbringing, academic backgrounds, and socioeconomic status, all of which might contribute to social distance and unbalanced power relations.

Keeping these concerns in mind, the researcher strove to minimize negative influences in two ways. First of all, the researcher acknowledged and valued participants' agency and power in knowledge. In addition, the researcher negotiated her identity "through continuous interaction between the bodily self and environment" (Cobb, 1977, p. 66). She wore jeans and sweaters like the participants did when she was on the research site. She tried to use the language the participants used. More importantly, she paid close attention to participants' needs. For example, one of her participants was worried about his pronunciation. The researcher sent him many website links about pronunciation and recommended the book *Well Said* to him. She volunteered to help them if needed, by sharing English learning strategies with them, assisting them in registering for the IELTS test, telling them the history of this university town, and translating English into Chinese while they were dealing with those agents who worked in home rental agencies. She conversed with the participants, positioning them and herself as L2 learner to L2 learner, Chinese international student to Chinese international student, and Chinese to Chinese.

More importantly, the researcher positioned herself as a receptive and nonjudgmental listener when they were telling lived experiences.

These case study techniques enabled her to be accepted as an insider by the students. She employed Chinese in the conversations with the participants, which made them feel comfortable with her presence. The symbolic signs including her outfits, language use, and attitudes signaled meanings that emphasized her desire to be included in this learning group. These techniques helped the researcher build a safe place “where groups can constitute themselves as horizontal, homogeneous, sovereign communities with high degrees of trust, [and] shared understandings, ...” (Pratt, 1991, p. 40). The researcher learned from her participants when she positioned herself as a knowledge co-constructor. She valued her participants’ diverse input and broad knowledge base even though they considered themselves as English limited. The researcher shifted her researcher identity in becoming an insider, a friend, a resource provider, and a consultant.

### **Participants’ Profiles**

The researcher recruited four Chinese ELI students at the outset of the project; unfortunately, one female student ceased participating in this study because of her busy schedule. The remaining three ELI students were male prospective undergraduate students from mainland China, including Danny, Lihua, and Hongjun. Danny and Lihua had been studying at the ELI for four months when the study began, and Hongjun for eight months. Danny’s English proficiency was at level 4 in speaking and listening, which means that he could speak and support opinions in discussions on slightly complex issues and listen to and comprehend 70% of conversations on short academic lectures or other informal lectures (see Appendix E). Danny’s structure was at level 4 as well, which means that he had the ability to understand and use adverb clauses, the passive, and modals (see Appendix E). However, Danny’s reading and writing was at level 5,

which means that he could read and understand academic texts and write essays of 800 words using varied modes and organizations and transitional phrases. Lihua's reading and writing skills were as the same level as Danny's, but his speaking and listening and structure were at level 5, which means that Lihua had the ability to speak and understand formal and informal conversations on complicated issues. He was also able to understand and use noun and adjective clauses and gerunds and infinitives. Hongjun's English proficiency was at level 6 in listening and speaking, reading and writing, and structure, which means that he could read and understand academic literature with 1000-1200 words from different disciplines and write 1200-word essays using citations and organizing multiple paragraphs. He had the ability to speak fluently in formal or informal conversations on various topics and to listen to and understand 70% of academic lectures. He should be able to understand and use complicated compound-clauses, including coordinating conjunctions and conditional sentences (see Appendix E).

### **WeChat Discussion: A Mobile-Networked Community of L2 Literacies**

The use of multiple modes and tools in L2 literacies practices has changed the ways of thinking, communication, and representation (Kress, 2010), in which a shift from the print to the electronic means to collect and transmit information has significantly marked this change. It also provides L2 learners with possibilities to develop multilayered identities (Ajay, 2008, 2009; Lam, 2000, 2004, 2006). WeChat, (micro message in English, 微信 in Chinese, sometimes called Chinese Facebook or Twitter), a mobile text and voice messaging communication service established by the Tencent (腾讯) company in China, was used by these three participants as a platform to practice L2 literacies. The WeChat online discussion group formed when the research began. In this group, participants took turns to lead discussions from the beginning of May to the beginning of June of 2016. Danny, Lihua, and Hongjun led 1, 2, and 2 discussions

respectively. Topics were related to virtual reality, education, language and culture, testing, and learning English from daily life.

The researcher brought together etic and emic perspectives on the smartphone-networked WeChat communication by using the approaches of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Gee, 2011) and content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) to analyze WeChat discussion exchanges to examine “patterns and functions of communication” (Saville-Troike, 1989, p. 11). According to Gee (2011), all meaning is local and contextual, because “meaning is a matter of situated meanings, customized in, to, and for context, used always against a rich store of Discourse knowledge [...] that are themselves ‘activated’ in, for, and by contexts” (p. 84). The researcher considered all the discussion group members as contexts of and for each other. Their written texts, head icons, and emoji genre were viewed as main contexts to understand how they designed and negotiated meanings. Since “context is an important notion for understanding language-in-use and for understanding the nature of discourse analysis” (Gee, 2011, p. 100), the researcher focused on what the WeChat discussants had written and how it had been written, what things (activities) and what others in this context were relevant and significant, what identities were shaped, and what relationships and politics were involved in this context of the WeChat discussion group when they interacted with each other in a form of text. Mainly, three elements in the process of meaning-making were carefully analyzed, including “the production of the text, the text itself, and the reception of the text” (Fairclough, 2003), in which both text senders and receivers’ positions, preferences, values, intentions, desires, and relations between texts and discussants were scrutinized.

Combining the etic and emic accounts allowed the researcher to identify the structural discursive attributes of WeChat discussions and its significance for identity (re)construction.

Data from this research showed that the WeChat discussion group appeared to function as a mechanism for these students to make and negotiate meanings, voice their arguments, change power relations, and design textual selves. The interactions among the three participants not only focused on exchanges of information, but also on exchanges of thoughts and perspectives, in and through which they combined genres of mixed dialogues, narratives, and arguments to participate in the smartphone, network-mediated communication. They shaped a group image as active, responsible, and competent L2 discussants. The section below will discuss how they interacted with each other to build a group identity.

These three participants discussed five topics by text messaging that represented what they saw, heard, thought, and experienced both in China and America. They used different linguistic resources to enact two slightly different social languages: formal language and informal language. For example, all participants used academic-like lexical items (e.g. “hardly,” “nevertheless,” “in addition,” and “although”) and complex syntax (e.g., “However, I have hardly ever thought it could be used as a teaching method because all the...”). Sometimes, they used less formal language:

“Well. That is right, but we can’t avoid it.”

“这个真的不好说。 It is not easy to say.

“Emoji emoji emoji” (They wrote these words and added emoticons (see Figure 4).

“怪我咯 Are you blaming me?”

In these textual interactions, all participants used various compound-complex sentences and clauses to express semantic and social relations by making statements and asking questions to complement each other, compete with each other, and dominate others (Fairclough, 2003). For example, Lihua asked his group members questions: “Whether English will dominate the world?”

From the current trend, it is possible. What do you think about this problem? Is that good or bad?" Hongjun answered Lihua's question by observing that "If people find a kind of language is easier to learn or have [sic] more advantage [sic] than another one, more and more people will turn to it." Lihua implicitly disagreed with Hongjun's response by arguing that "Yes, I agree with you, but from a cultural point of view, no one wants to see their culture be invaded." Lihua took one step further to argue that "Each language has its charm. You should learn to accept and appreciate it." His independent and critical thinking dominated the discussion. In addition, Hongjun intended to explore the function of testing by asking: "what is [sic] meaning and function of the tests, exams and quizzes to us or society?" Danny's response to Hongjun's question clearly expressed his stance: "... the type of exam is necessary? Maybe, we need more experiences rather than examination [sic]." The interactions among the three fully demonstrated their knowledge base, thinking process, identification, and power relations.

Specifically, for the first topic, the participants discussed how virtual reality has been used to improve teaching and learning effectiveness and efficiency. The participants pointed out the advantages and disadvantages of virtual reality in their lives. They were able to pinpoint its problems and predict its possibilities. For example, Hongjun wrote,

Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows. We can use VR to do... We can... It can... However... Although... In other words, VR is a controversial issue for me unless it's under control. (Hongjun's WeChat exchange, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Lihua expressed, "I am really interested in the virtual reality. It's an epoch-making product, I suppose." Danny made an argument that "As we all know virtual reality [sic] always be [sic] used in game or entertainment. At the same time, it can be used in education as a kind of unique technology."

In the second discussion, participants pointed out the importance of education and compared Chinese education and American education. For instance, Danny wrote,

I think both of two countries (China and USA) meet a huge challenge in education. Personality [sic], I think Chinese parents pay more attention to the next generations' education... On the other hand, USA have [sic] other education problems...(Danny's WeChat exchange, May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun added, "Education is associated with our future and our country's future."

In the third discussion of language and culture, participants discussed the intricate relationship between language and culture and advocated diversity of languages and cultures. For example, Lihua claimed that "Increasingly people choose English as their second language... However, with the development of English, some minority languages are dying at a faster pace" and "The disappearance of language [sic] can destroy the cultural diversity." Danny and Hongjun agreed with Lihua.

The topic on examination triggered an informal debate, in which all the participants expressed their different opinions from different perspectives. For instance, Lihua suggested, "We can learn about our own shortcomings and some of the things that still need to be improved through the exam. In addition, I suppose the examination is not only a kind of evaluation but also a good practice." Hongjun held a negative attitude toward testing by declaring that "As an ordinary student, I do not like test [sic]..." Danny proposed that "we need more experiences rather than examination [sic]."

The last discussion advocated an effective strategy for L2 acquisition: learning English from daily life. Lihua recommended that "I suppose we should learn English from our daily lives if we want to make our English closer to the native speaker's English [sic]"; unfortunately, Danny and Hongjun did not agree with him. The five topics were related to their everyday and academic life.

All the topics evoked these participants' deep and kaleidoscopic thinking. The participants drew on their lived experiences to make arguments to show their diverse opinions, which accentuated their independent and critical thinking by using different discourse markers (Fairclough, 2003) and statements, such as declarative statements and evaluative statements. They were willing and able to text their different ideas, which was an important note of an identity shift from Chinese culture. Chinese people embrace “zhongyongzhidao” (中庸之道 in Chinese); that is to keep in the middle way or go with the flow. Generally speaking, Chinese people tend to agree to disagree. Sometimes they silence themselves when they feel what they say would offend the interlocutor(s) or would bring themselves harm. Interestingly, these three Chinese ELI students bravely conveyed their diverse perspectives in this discussion group from the beginning until the end. These participants' interviews, explored below, revealed that they viewed the WeChat discussion as a platform to pique learning interest, exchange information, share and grow knowledge, develop dialectic, divergent, and critical thinking skills. All three participants used compound sentences, deontic modalities, and discourse markers to express their experiences and thoughts in a smartphone, network-mediated community. Even though they texted one another in English, they also used Chinese and the emoji genre to design meanings, which enriched the diversity of communication and representation (see Figure 4).

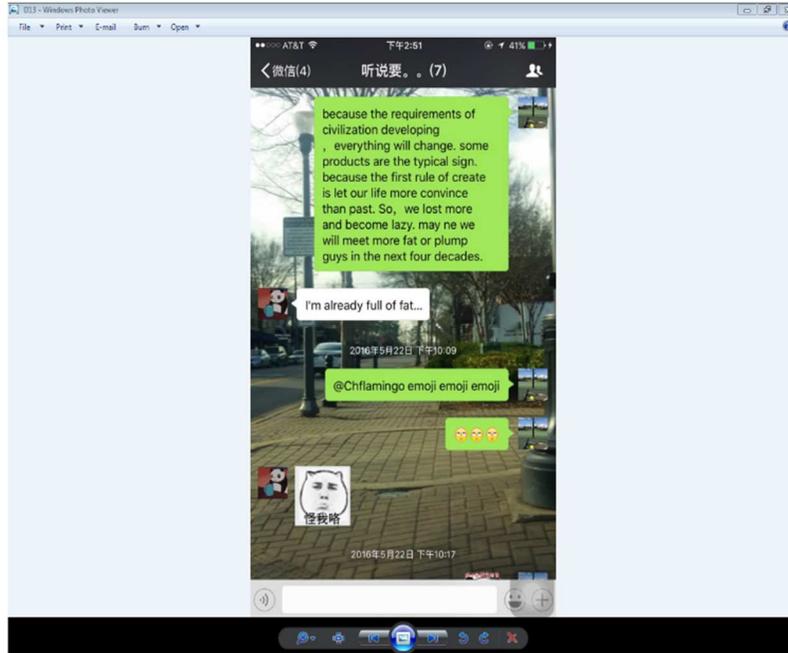


Figure 4. The combination of English, Chinese and emoji genre

### Ability to Collect and Process Information

Also, these participants displayed their abilities to collect and process information before sending the messages to the WeChat group. All of them stated that they combined their former knowledge with information they searched from online to make arguments. Danny explained: “when I was leading a discussion, I went to TED Talks.com a lot to search for new and interesting topics. And then picked the best one to invite my group members to discuss it.” Lihua added,

Now that we are studying English here, we should know English and learn it very well. So I wanted to pick a topic that was related to language. I googled the word English on my phone, but I did not find anything interesting. And then I visited the website of the Youdao dictionary. I found an interesting article that fit with my topic. It said that English has dominated this world, but some minority languages are dying. I decided to use this article as a source to lead a discussion. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun noted,

I ruminated on this topic (education) long time ago. I really have my own thinking about Chinese education. Also, I wanted to solicit a common thinking, because my group

members and I were the products of Chinese education. We studied in China for many years before we came to America. We have many ideas on Chinese education. Also, we have many things to say about Chinese education. (Interview with Hongjun, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

In addition, they paid close attention to selecting topics and to their group members' responses while they were leading discussions, because they intended to be responsible and adequate discussion leaders. For example, Danny noted, "My responsibility forced me to prepare well for each topic, because I was a discussion leader." Hongjun stated, "As a discussion leader, I need to select a topic, which is very important." Lihua added, "As a leading discussant, I pay close attention to my members' responses, because I can tell if I did a good job through reading their text messages. I must be like a leader."

Even though the three participants' interactions with each other by texting messages developed a group image, each individual fashioned unique and ongoing textual selves in this discussion group. The researcher will discuss each individual participant in the following chapters (from Chapters V- VII) by analyzing data from interviews, class observations and field notes, and WeChat discussion exchanges in the next section.

## CHAPTER V:

### DANNY

#### **Data from the First Interview**

##### **Chinese Name and Self-conception**

Danny was a 21-year-old Chinese male student from a middle class family. Danny was his English name. He preferred his international classmates to call him Danny. But his Chinese classmates called his Chinese name. He considered his Chinese name consequential, because

My Chinese name was given by my grandfather. He wanted me to be a huge pillar column for a magnificent building, which means that I am supposed to be a useful and valuable person for my country. This name is very Chinese and meaningful. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny's Chinese name carried his family's hope, because his grandfather anticipated that he would be a successful person who was able to serve his country with superb intelligence and excellent capability. Danny did not want to reveal his real Chinese name in this research, because of his concerns about privacy. Danny succeeded in the Chinese Gaokao (National Higher Education Entrance Examination) and was the head of the Liaison Department of the Student Union in his college when he was in China, which he performed as his Chinese name indicated. The Liaison Department belonged to the Student Union in his college in which Danny was in charge of fundraising for students' activities. He also took part in numerous social and extracurricular activities. He made effort to influence others by his driving force. He described,

I can give others a continuous positive driving force (正能量). When I was in a college in China, I ran for the head of the Liaison Department of the Student Union. I thought that the Liaison Department was the ideal place to develop the ability to interact with people

and solve problems, by which I could serve my university as well. I gave many speeches to different audiences to persuade them to vote for me. Eventually I became the new head of the Liaison Department. I also ran a small business with my friends and classmates by that time. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

He said that he was unique, active, and ambitious. He intended to build a bright future. He studied in that college for a year and then came to America to pursue his higher education, in light of his perception that the Chinese tertiary education was not as good as American's.

Danny's Chinese name, as a symbolic artifact, carried rich meanings that emanated from interactions between Danny and his Chinese name. He considered his Chinese name "very Chinese and meaningful," which was his interpretation of his grandfather and his parents' intentions of giving him this name. Danny's interpretation can be understood as his Chinese name represented his core identity (Blum, 1997; Watson, 1986), that is why he requested his Chinese classmates to call him by his Chinese name. Also, he understood that his Chinese name carried his familial expectations and hope for him, because he said that "I am supposed to be a useful and valuable person for my country." In addition, his name indexed his ability to lead, because it implied that he was expected to be "a huge pillar column for a magnificent building." He appropriating these elements that his Chinese name denoted to study English here in America. He internalized his Chinese name as an indication to guide him how to act and react with himself and with others at the ELI. He interacted with his Chinese name to generate new meanings to adjust his motivations, attitudes, and actions in different contexts and situations (Blumer, 1969). The interactions entailed the fluidity, dynamic, and complexity of its meanings that his name carried in a particular place and at a particular time. Danny's Chinese name not only documented his history in China, but also impacted his work here in America, as well as signified his direction for his future. Interestingly, his choice to use both an English and Chinese name in his classes created intersections with his two identities in the context of his study. His

choice to use both his Chinese name and an English name had pedagogical implications, which will be discussed in Chapter IX.

### **Keepsake: A Picture of Plum Blossoms**

When Danny first arrived at this university, he faced many challenges, such as language barriers, unfamiliarity with the local culture, difficulty in finding place to stay (he stayed in a hotel for two weeks before he moved to his apartment), and inconveniences of public transportation. His father knew about his situation and sent him a picture of plum blossoms (as shown in figure 5 below) before the Chinese New Year. Danny highly valued this picture, even though he brought two books and an amulet as keepsakes from China to America. He considered this picture as a motivator to rise above predicaments. He explained,

My dad sent me a picture of plum blossoms before this Chinese New Year. I think this picture is very important to me. It tells me to be as strong as the plum blossoms. In Chinese culture, the plum blossom, bamboo, and the pine tree are called three friends of winter. These three have the same characteristic: persistence and resilience. In winter, most of trees shed leaves, but bamboo and pine trees are still green; most flowers die because they cannot stand the bitter cold, but plum trees blossom beautifully and emit sweet fragrance. Chinese scholars view these three as their role models to encourage them to get through bad situations. This picture reminds me of a famous Chinese epigram: 宝剑锋从磨砺出 梅花香自苦寒来, which means one makes a sword sharp by sharpening it, or, the fragrance of plum blossoms only arises from the bitter cold. My dad wants me to be persistent, tough, and dogged like plum blossoms blossoming in the dead of winter. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)



*Figure 5.* Danny's picture of plum of blossoms

This picture of plum blossom is imbued with rich meanings, which embodied Danny's father's expectation for him, encouraging him to be as strong as the blossom to meet challenges and overcome quandaries. Danny understood his father's intention of sending him the picture when he first arrived in this country. He internalized his father's hope; therefore, he viewed himself as a plum blossom blossoming in the mire, which echoed Blumer's (1969) claim that "[symbolic interactionism] sees meaning as arising in the process of interaction between people. The meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other persons act toward the person with regard to the thing" (p. 4). The picture of plum blossoms, as a material artifact, contained rich and deep meanings that arose from interactions between Danny and his father. He understood that his father sent him this picture to encourage him to be as strong as the plum blossoms when he faced difficult situations. The encouragement that was symbolized by this picture motivated Danny to cope with difficulties, which also mirrored Phal and Rowsell's (2010) observation that artifacts can be sites of possibility including discursive mediation and mediated agency (p. vii). Learning a L2 in a foreign country is fraught with toil and drudgery, which not only requires intelligence, but also demands perseverance (Duff, 2002; Liu, 2001, 2002; Miller, 2000, 2003a, 2003b). The latter is much more crucial than the former. Danny seemed to be able to handle all the difficulties with the encouragement of the picture. Danny's use of his keepsake to interpret and formulate his identity has possible pedagogical implications, which will be discussed in Chapter IX.

### **Language Barriers and Embarrassment**

Speaking a dominant language fluently increases all forms of capital, including cultural capital, social capital, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). The interview excerpt below persuasively substantiates the relationship between language and economic capital. Danny's

failure to speak the legitimate language--English directly resulted in his economic loss. For example, when he landed in Detroit airport, he was looking for a restaurant to have lunch. He walked in a fast food restaurant and looked at the menu on the wall, but he did not know how to utter the names of food in English. He tried to have a conversation with a waiter; unfortunately, they did not quite understand each other. He used his fingers to point to the meal on the menu to tell the waiter what he wanted. Eventually, Danny ordered a big meal due to his broken English. The cost of the meal surprised Danny and he stated,

‘My God! Forty-seven dollars!’ I was really upset with myself. If I could speak English well, I would not spend \$ 47 on a meal... Even though I was very hungry, I did not enjoy it at all. I lost interest in my surroundings. I disgraced myself. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Unable to voice his needs and requests in the restaurant, Danny became anxious and frustrated. Pointing to the name of food on the menu made him feel ashamed. In addition to his loss of economic capital, Danny felt a sense of self-doubt and self-criticism. Danny’s unpleasant experience evidenced that the relation of language with identity, which supports Weedon’s (1987) argument that language is the place “where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed” (p. 21). Danny’s new identity as an illegitimate English speaker was linguistically and socially constructed. His Chinese cultural identities were challenged and devalued in this specific context. He felt a sense of loss and disconnection.

Danny’s encounter in another restaurant discouraged him significantly. One day when his Chinese friend took him to a Japanese restaurant, Danny went to a food counter to order a meal. He thought the cook was Chinese, so he talked to him in Chinese, but the cook did not understand him. Danny was so nervous that he could not say a single word in English. He started to use fingers to point to the food. The cook asked him, “Can you speak English?” Danny did not say anything to the cook because

His words insulted me. He despised me. After he said that, he gave me a scornful look and then shook his head. His look made me feel really uncomfortable. It was like “now that you cannot speak English, why did you come here?” I was really upset. His words ran in my ears all the time. Eventually, my friend helped me ordered a meal, but mine was much less than his (we ordered the same meals). After I went back home, I reflected on myself all the afternoon. I felt humiliated by him and by myself. I will never forget that man and his words. I decided to study English as hard as I can to speak English like a native. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny was the head of the Liaison Department of the Student Union when he was in China, but he even did not know how to order a meal in English in the U. S. His limited L2 literacies skills became the main reason for his self-doubt. Danny could have responded to the cook but he did not. He was frustrated and humiliated. It was the cook not Danny who could determine if the conversation could proceed. Facing the cook’s question, Danny was like a wooden log. He could not say a single word. He might have been able to explain something to the cook, but the situation made him speechless. Fear and anxiety resulted from the discourse led to a conversation breakdown. In this discourse, the cook was the subject, but Danny was subjected to it. Seemingly, Danny had opportunities to practice his L2, but the chance was ruined by both Danny and the cook. Danny explained, “he made me feel terrible. I could have said something like ‘of course, I can speak English. Do you think I am an idiot,’ but I did not say anything. I have never met a situation like this.” (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

This finding supports the statement that L2 learners negotiate a sense of self in different contexts at different times to gain access to or are rejected access to powerful and meaningful social networks through language (Norton Peirce, 1995; Heller, 1987). Danny’s limited English proficiency deprived him from the opportunity to claim his L2 identity in this particular context. Even though he had access to the symbolic resources, he did not have chance to use English. He thus lost the opportunity to negotiate a sense of self.

A grocery store can be a place for L2 learners to practice English, but inadequate English proficiency might counteract the L2 learner's intention to practice the L2. For example, when Danny bought groceries at Walmart with his Chinese friend, the cashier's behavior resulted in his refusal to speak English. Danny expounded,

When my friend and I bought some groceries at Walmart, we were about to leave. The cashier, an elderly lady came to me and asked me to give her my receipt. I did not understand why she took my receipt back. My friend asked me what happened in Chinese. I said that the lady wanted to check my receipt. She might want to know if I paid for the groceries successfully. When the lady returned my receipt and heard me speak Chinese to my friend, she asked me: "Why do you speak Chinese in public in America?" I was very angry and talked back: "Why should not I speak my own language?" (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny did not understand why the cashier took his receipt back at Walmart, but he was unable to express his inquiry. Nor did he comprehend that cashier completely. Even though he was confused about being asked to show his receipt to the cashier, he failed to ask for a reason. The low level of English proficiency made him an illiterate in L2. He wanted to know what happened, but he could not. He simply could guess why the lady took back his receipt. Confusion about what happened and the cashier's question angered Danny, so he decided to use his home language instead of the L2 to show his resistance.

Danny's resistance to speak English confirmed McNamara's (1997) remark on social identity, which implies that L2 learners' experiences constitute "a complex re-negotiation of their social identity in the new society, a process that has profound implications for their attitudes to their own language and the learning of the majority group's language" (p. 561). When Danny was unable to use English, he chose speaking Chinese to project his Chinese identity—a capable Chinese speaker to compromise his identity loss in this context. A strong desire to speak Chinese in an American grocery store exercised his agency as a decision maker to use his own language.

## **Making American Friends**

Since L2 acquisition is a process of acquiring new knowledge of culture and language (Watson-Gegeo & Nelson, 2003) by socializing and interacting with expert and competent language users (Lave & Wenger, 1991), it is crucial for L2 learners to have access to participatory roles in a community of practice. Danny's conversation with two American fans of house music provided him with opportunities to practice his L2 literacies skills. He explained,

One Sunday, while I was listening to house music at home, I heard somebody knock at my door. I thought something bad happened. I opened the door and saw two Americans. I asked them: "Excuse me?" They said something I totally could not understand. One of them pointed to my headphones and said "Hardwell" again and again. I realized that they were interested in house music. I let them in and we listened to the music together. We also discussed music a little bit. It was hard to communicate because my English is not good. Fortunately, one of them could speak some Chinese. Sometimes, I used my phone to look up words to help me express myself. Sometimes we used body language to communicate. Before they left, I asked them to leave their phone numbers. Sometimes I invited them to play ping-pang and basketball; sometimes we just got together to talk about music. We became friends eventually. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The conversation with two Americans was difficult, but Danny used a digital tool, his smart phone, to facilitate the communication. He also used the body language to mediate the verbal interaction. He actively built a connection with these two Americans in order to participate in the local community of practice. He tried to develop the friendship with them by playing ping-pong and basketball with them, which could be a way to establish easy access to both linguistic and cultural capital.

Danny went to the Student Recreation Center to exercise and make new friends. His ping-pong skills helped him make a new American friend. While he was playing ping-pong with his Chinese classmate, an American student was watching them. After watching for a while, this American student started to talk with them. He asked if Danny could play ping-pong with him. Danny agreed. Danny found that this student was not a good ping-pong player, so he wanted to

teach him, but he did not know how to say certain words in English. He tried to use gestures, which helped a lot. Danny promised him to teach him later. Danny was preparing to teach this American student. He stated,

I went back to my apartment and called my friends in China to ask them how to teach ping-pong in English. Also, I visited several Chinese websites and collected information about playing ping-pong. I looked up dictionaries to translate Chinese into English. After doing homework, I contacted this American student and invited him to the Student Recreation Center to play ping-pong again. Before long we became friends. I was so proud of myself. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Not only did Danny take advantage of his social networks in China, but also drew on modern technological tools to help him teach his American friend ping-pong. His ability to use multiple tools and modes allowed him to create opportunities to make a new American friend, which provided him with possibilities for symbolic recourses (Bourdieu, 1986) and symbolic competence (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007).

### **Participation in Mixed Groups**

The classroom, as another community of practice, functioned as a predominant platform for Danny to co-construct knowledge, enrich linguistic repertoires, and gain membership, which are crucially linked with agency, difference, and similarity (Duff, 2002). For example, Danny was immersed in the mixed groups (group members from different countries, such as Brazil, Colombia, India, South Korea, Japan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Ukraine, and Thailand) full of potential meanings, which allowed him to gain access to linguistic and cultural resources. The immersion also enabled him to reconstruct and renegotiate his agency to regulate self-improvement by actively engaging in the mixed group learning. Danny positioned himself as a Chinese expert who transmitted and expanded Chinese culture to his international classmates. He added,

I feel like an international citizen in the mixed group, because my group members come from different countries. They are interested in Chinese culture. I am the only Chinese person in my group. I am like a Chinese authority. They asked me about my Chinese name like “Why did your parents give you this name?” “What does your culture look like?” “Does your government control everything?” I told them what I know. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny developed multiple identities in his mixed group learning, including an international citizen and a Chinese authority, which built a sense of self-worth and fulfillment. The process of identity construction not only attributed to his Chinese cultural repertoire, but also his willingness and competence to use multiple modes and tools. For example,

Sometimes, I have to search for information about Chinese history, traditions, and policies and then talk to them. I used my phone a lot to show them videos and pictures when I told them Chinese culture and tradition. It is hard to use words to express my meanings sometimes, but it is a lot easier to use pictures to show them what I am talking about. I am very proud when I introduce Chinese culture to them. (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The use of multimodality enabled him to expand Chinese culture to his international classmates, which made him a culture broker. Also, the inclusive and diverse learning environment helped him become a confident L2 learner. He said, “I am not nervous, because our English proficiency is almost the same.” At the same time, he was influenced by other cultures as well. Knowing other peoples and cultures inspired him to understand Chinese culture deeper and better, which built a sense of national pride. He noted,

I learned a lot from my international classmates as well, like Turkish people do not eat pork; married Muslim women do not talk to strange men; there is a huge gap between the rich people and poor people in Colombia; and Japanese eat sushi a lot. I am so proud of myself and my culture! (Interview with Danny, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The mixed group learning required cooperation and scaffolding, which illustrated an understanding of how competent socializers, artifacts, and structured environment synergistically promote novices’ engagement in communicative practices. Danny was an expert in Chinese culture, but a novice of other cultures. Scaffolding and being scaffolded, Danny shifted his

multiple identities to build a sense of belonging. Language socialization in mixed groups shaped his multilayered identities. Also, using multiple modes and tools increased his authority and reinforced a sense of cultural ownership. The mixed group learning increased Danny's sense of affiliation, which in turn helped him re-value his self-worth and self-efficacy.

### **Data from Class Observations and Field Notes**

#### **Danny's Three Classes**

The researcher observed Danny's three classes, including listening and speaking, reading and writing, and structure. These three classes lasted for 1 hour and twenty minutes, 2 hours and 15 minutes, and 1 hour and 30 minutes respectively. In these classes, Danny always sat in the front row or in the middle of the classroom. He was most active in the speaking and listening class. In his structure class, he interacted with the instructor and classmates to study the passive voice. However, he was quiet in his reading and writing class. He did not voluntarily answer any question, but was called upon once by his instructor. He claimed that this instructor talked too fast for him to follow. In the section below, the researcher will discuss each class in turn.

**Listening and speaking.** The listening and speaking class was intended to provide a format for students to practice listening to spoken English and speaking English through activities such as group discussions. The researcher visited Danny's listening and speaking class twice, because this class was divided into two sessions: in the first session, students were told to collect information and prepare for the group discussion; in the second session, students were supposed to lead a discussion for 15-20 minutes. The first class took place in the language lab, which was equipped with many computers and a large screen TV. Also, the lab was three times bigger than the regular classrooms. There were 14 international students in this class, including six Saudi Arabian male students, four Chinese male students, two Colombian male students, one

Colombian female student, and one Japanese male student. The instructor was a young female American. In the first session, Danny was sitting in the first row of the lab. When the instructor explained the instructions for the day, which was doing research on controversial topics, Danny took a picture of the instructions on the screen of the projector by using his smart phone. When the instructor asked students to form groups of four, he showed his index finger to his class and said: “Number one comes to the first group.” He acted as a group leader. When his group sat in front of the computers, he was the first to start typing words on the computer. Sometimes he checked his phone for new and difficult words to make sure his spelling was correct. He also checked his phone to refer to the instructions the instructor had presented. He was the first one to find a video on YouTube and told his group members: “I found a video very interesting. The title is *Vaccination: Parents Conclude Vaccinations Are Not Safe for Their Children*. Everybody in his group then listened to this video and summarized its main idea.

Danny searched for and found five videos for this topic. He watched the videos and took notes on the main ideas of these videos. He googled the subject of vaccinating children in developing and developed countries to make comparisons and contrast how people perceived vaccination in different countries. Danny’s interaction with various modes and tools in collecting and processing information necessary for his listening and speaking mediated his English learning.

In the second session of this class, Danny led a discussion in a group of four. He initiated dialogues with his group members for 15 minutes. He led his members to discuss the topic vaccination by asking them five questions including 1) what do you think about vaccination; 2) what is the law about vaccination in your country; 3) what your government should do in the future; 4) do you think vaccinations should be taken at one time or in multiple times; 5) and in

developing countries, how do people know about vaccination? After the group discussion, the instructor asked the class about their opinions on vaccination. Danny was the first one to answer her question: “I think it is important to vaccinate children. Also, we have the responsibility to help people to know the importance of vaccination in developing countries.” The instructor praised him. After another leader in his group finished leading the second round discussion on Drones, Danny was again the first one to answer his instructor’s question: “Drones could be good or bad for human beings. It depends on the purpose.” More importantly, Danny interacted with multiple modes and tools, such as his smart phone, the computer in the lab, YouTube, the audio materials, discussion with his classmates, and interactions with his instructor, to design and negotiate meanings. Again, he performed as a user of multiple modes of communication.

**Reading and writing.** The reading and writing class was designed as an interactive and reflective experience of reading and writing, in which reading and writing were combined. This specific class taught students how to write an introduction and familiarize them with cohesive and organized body paragraphs. Danny’s reading and writing classroom was small, but cozy. There were four rows of desks. Each row had four desks. Several pictures were hung on the three walls in this room. The instructor’s desk was in the front of this classroom, with a computer on the instructor’s desk. On the front wall, there was a large screen TV. There were seven international students in this class, including four Turkish males and one female and two Chinese male students. Danny sat in the back row of this classroom. One Chinese student sat next to him.

Before the class, Danny took out his notebook and worksheets. His Chinese classmate checked with him about homework in Chinese. The instructor was a young male American. The content of this class was *Reading and Writing 4: Introduction Styles*. The instructor led the class to review five ways to introduce a piece of writing, using a question-answer mode. Students gave

him the answers: the five introduction styles were general-to-specific, hook question, turnabout, dramatic entrance, interesting facts or statistics, and interesting quotations. When the instructor called upon one student to answer a question, Danny used his phone to check a word and then he took notes. The instructor introduced the new task of this class: learning how to write three body paragraphs. He asked the class to look at two examples: one about the death penalty; the other about handguns (see Appendix F). Students read the two essays given out by the instructor. Danny used his phone again to check new words. After reading, the instructor guided the class to discuss the introduction styles of these two essays and how the writers organized the essays. Danny was called upon to answer a question, to which he gave the right answer. The class was not engaging, which could be attributed to the teaching content. But Danny considered that the instructor spoke too fast and unclearly, which resulted in Danny's difficulty in understanding him. Most of the time, Danny only nodded or shook his head to express agreement or disagreement when the instructor asked questions, with little verbal communication.

**Structure.** The structure class was intended to explain grammar rules to ELI students through direct instructions and students' oral and written exercises. This class the researcher visited taught students what the passive voice was and how to correctly use passive voice to speak and write. The setting of the structure classroom was the same as the reading and writing classroom, but the class was full. There were 16 international students, including four Turkish male students, two Turkish female students, five Chinese male students, and one Japanese female student. Danny sat in the first row of the classroom. The instructor was a young female American, who taught her students about a grammatical construction, passive voice. After a short introduction, the instructor put students into groups of four to discuss exercise 10 in the textbook. Danny acted as a group leader. He asked his group members questions or answered their

questions. Also, he voluntarily answered his teacher's questions five times when the instructor led the whole class discussion. For example, when the teacher wrote the sentence "The Chinese speak Mandarin" on the white board and asked the class to change it into the passive voice, Danny answered: "Mandarin is spoken by the Chinese." When the teacher asked the class to tell her the differences between the two sentences, Danny explained, "The subject in the first sentence became the object in the second sentence. Put the preposition word 'by' before the object. The object in the first sentence became the subject in the second sentence..."

In conclusion, Danny actively participated in his speaking and listening and structure classes by interacting with his smartphones and other tools and modes. His motivation to engage in class activities was bolstered by his Chinese name, his positive driving force, and his memory of his family's expectations, present in his keepsake. Danny's class performance has significant pedagogical implications, which will be discussed in Chapter IX.

### **Data from the Second Interview**

#### **A 30-Day Project**

Research on language and identity shows that identity is formed and shaped through interactions with peers in a sociocultural and institutional context (Norton Peirce, 1995; Swain & Deters, 2007; Talmy, 2008; van Lier, 2004; Wenger, 1998). Danny indicated that his listening and speaking classes were most helpful for his L2 literacies practices, especially his 30-day project conducted in his former listening and speaking class. He said that he overcame a series of challenges and setbacks to make a 3D ship model (see Figure 6) for his project. He explained,

I like 3D ship model, so I planned to make one. When I was designing and making this model, I faced many difficulties. The programming for the ship model was very crucial, which required precision and carefulness. If there was a little error, the whole design would be ruined. The selection of the materials was important too. If the material does not match the programming, the 3D printer in the library cannot print it out. This project took me so much time and effort. (Interview with Danny, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016)



*Figure 6.* Danny's 3D ship model

Except for difficulty in material selection, the language of instruction for programming was another challenge, because it was written in Spanish. Danny invited his classmate to translate it into English. After finishing programming, Danny made an appointment with a librarian to print out this ship model. When Danny saw the model, he was very happy. He said, "I think I have a talent for designing a 3D ship model." The last challenge for this project was to present the process and product of making the 3D ship model to his classmates and his instructor in this class. After fine preparation, Danny presented what he experienced and felt when he designed and made this model. He surprised his classmates. Danny stated,

I showed my classmates what I did and how I felt by using PPT. My classmates said "Wow" and gave me applause when they saw my ship model. I told them that I learned a lot from this project. I said: "I learned to be careful; I must be careful." I used animation to display these words on the PPT. I think I amazed my classmates and my teacher. My teacher asked me to pass around the 3D ship model, I was so proud. (Interview with Danny, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

This language mediated activity improved Danny's L2 literacies skills significantly. First, he used PPT slides to present what he had learned by conducting this project: carefulness. In his PPT, the word "careful" was displayed in black bold font. Through an integration of text, color, animation, and typography, Danny developed a compositional configuration which included "Careful and Must Be Careful" for visual salience. The layout of the text situated the theme of this project within Danny's own experience of L2 learning, which embodied not only his agency,

but also his identity as a 3D ship model designer and meaning maker. He added, “making this ship required rich imagination and good time management. I did it. I think I have the talent for designing.” Secondly, he practiced listening and speaking by making an appointment with a librarian to print out the 3D ship model and communicating with his classmate to translate Spanish into English. As a result, the 3D ship model project helped Danny gain recognition from his classmates and his instructor. He added, “my teacher said that my pronunciation was bad. But after this presentation, she said that my pronunciation was better than before.” The recognition empowered and motivated him to further enhance L2 literacies practices. More importantly, he reinforced his membership in this class community of L2 practice as a recognizable and acceptable L2 user.

The finding confirmed the relationship between language and power. Bourdieu (1977) argued that

Language is not only an instrument of communication or even of knowledge, but also an instrument of power. One seeks not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished. Whence the complete definition of competence as right to speak.... Competence implies the power to impose reception. (p. 20)

Danny’s success in making the 3D ship model not only displayed his communicative competence, but also strengthened his multiple identities in the L2 community of learning, which helped him obtain power to speak and impose reception.

### **Danny’s Perception of WeChat Discussion**

Danny claimed his WeChat discussion improved his L2 literacies. He stated,

The discussion is like a forum. Everybody can express their different ideas by writing messages. Every time before sending a text message, I would read or watch the material relevant to the topic first and then think about how to write a small paragraph. After reading an article or watching a video, I read the discussion leader’s text message and others as well. And then I wrote my understandings on the topic. Finally, I sent it to WeChat. (Interview with Danny, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

When Danny led a discussion, he acted as a leader. He added, “if I lead a discussion, I need to find an interesting topic. At least my members can accept it.” He always visited TED Talks.com to look for useful information. He reported, “last time the topic *This virtual lab will revolutionize science class* I led was popular. I like TED Talks, so I found this one at TED Talks.com.” After selecting a topic, he wrote a summary of that topic and then invited his group members to discuss it. Participation in WeChat discussion enabled Danny to practice listening, reading, and writing skills. As a discussion leader, Danny paid attention to his group members’ preference and interest. The identity as a discussion leader helped Danny develop a sense of responsibility and consideration for others. His success in leading a discussion was tightly related to his group members’ responses and reactions.

**Data from WeChat discussion exchanges.** Jorgensen and Phillips’ (2002) observation on the relations between utterance and identification states that when people talk or write, they position themselves in the oral text or the written text. The section below will discuss how Danny fashioned his multiple and dynamic identities through using the written text in the WeChat discussion.

**Identity as a leader.** In his leading discussion on *This Virtual Lab Will Revolutionize Science Class*, Danny used four lines to introduce this topic. He gave a strong commitment to the truth of virtual reality in game and entertainment in the first sentence. He wrote, “As we all know virtual reality always be [sic] used in game or entertainment,” in which the discourse marker “As we all know” emphasized the common sense that virtual reality is popularly used in games and entertainment. This declarative statement was not his personal opinion, but an inclusive “we” community common experience. Danny foregrounded the significance of virtual reality, which served as a hook to trigger his readers’ interest, because young adults including his group

members like virtual reality. However, Danny's focus was not on virtual reality in entertainment, but on education. He used three sentences to explain why he brought about this topic. First of all, virtual reality "can be used in education" as a technological tool to facilitate teaching and learning, which seemed new, because it has not been as popular as in entertainment. Secondly, he noted that this topic was close to the researcher's research project. The reasons showed his consideration in selecting a topic.

Danny was inspired by a TED Talk, because he wrote, "this video tells us...", which invited the group members to refer to it. Unfortunately, he did not mention where he watched this video in this piece. He might have known his group members were fans of TED Talks. This video functioned as an intertextual resource not only providing the group members with contextual information, but also piquing their curiosity, which encouraged them to watch it and then generate a discussion. Also, he used the first person plural pronoun "us" twice to shorten the distance between him and his audience, which helped him engage his group members with him to discuss this topic. Apparently, he positioned himself as a member in this discussion group by discussing a topic in which his group members were interested and using the first person plural pronoun. This piece of language Danny wrote was quite academic, which showed "a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular type of what (activity)" (Gee, 2011, p. 35). He identified himself as a careful and thoughtful discussion leader.

Danny received two long responses from his group members Lihua and Hongjun, which demonstrated their common interest and resonance with this topic. In Lihua's response, he wrote, "I am really interested in the virtual reality." He also considered virtual reality "an epoch-making product." In response, Hongjun wrote, "Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows," which not only echoed Danny's inspiration (the video), but also agreed with

Danny on selection of this topic, because virtual reality had a promising future. Danny performed well as a discussion leader based on Lihua and Hongjun's exchanges. Their active participation in this discussion and their detailed responses recognized Danny as a leading discussant. In other words, his members' responses confirmed his identity as a discussion leader in this particular context.

***Identity as a discussant.*** As a discussion participant, he performed differently. In the response to his group member' (Hongjun) s topic on *Changing Education Paradigms* presented by Dr. Ken Robinson, Danny wrote two pieces of opinions on this topic. In the first sentence of the first piece, he wrote, "I couldn't have said it better," which meant that Danny agreed with his group members on this topic. In the following two sentences, he briefly outlined this video.

In his second piece, he wrote six lines to express his perspective on education, which could be summarized in three main points: (1) both China and America met a challenge in education;(2) the definition of education might be different in these two countries; and (3) Chinese parents paid more attention to the young generation's education than American parents did. Specifically, he used two cognitive statements marked by "I think" to show his thinking and knowing. After he pointed out that Chinese students suffered more pressure than American students did because of the Chinese Gaokao, Danny used a conjunction "And" to present additional information about Chinese education. After writing his argument on problems with Chinese education, Danny used a contrastive connector "On the other hand" to display American's education problems, which emphasized his argument by saying that both Chinese and America faced challenges in education. However, he did not give details about the challenges facing American education. He might not be familiar with American education, but

he focused on Chinese education. He used his lived experience to tell his readers what he knew and thought about, which showed his authoritative knowledge about Chinese education.

His academic-like lexical items such as “unpredicted,” “troubling,” and “on the other hand” and complex syntax including “I think” and “And it became an unpredicted trend when...” as well as a clear argumentative structure, such as presenting the main idea: both America and China met huge challenges in education in the first sentence, and then provided supportive points by listing Chinese educational problems and American problems respectively not only answered his discussion leader’s question, but also detailed his thinking process. In this piece of language, Danny developed identities as a deep thinker and a Chinese education authority by using his unique Discourse (who he was and what he was discussing).

When the discussion leader Hongjun responded to him on this topic, he wrote,

Yes, the education is associated with our future career and lifestyle. I hope the government can make some education policy to support education although economy has the priority in China. However... We can find many facts and changes if we observe carefully. (Hongjun’s WeChat exchange, May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2016)

Danny agreed with Hongjun on the importance of education. He wrote, “Yes, the education is associated with our future career and lifestyle,” which was alignment with Hongjun’s response: “Education is associated with our future and our country’s future,” but he hoped that the Chinese government could establish and implement effective polices to support its education. The discourse marker “I hope” presented his affective mental process, which illustrated his wish for his government to do something to improve the Chinese education. He also used a modal verb “can” to indicate that there were possibilities for the Chinese government to support its education. Danny employed the discourse marker “although” to imply the fact that the Chinese government focused on economy, but he hoped the government could make a change in the Chinese education. In the third sentence, Danny used another discourse marker

“however” to change his attitude toward his government by admitting its contribution to education. Here, Danny showed his dialogical thinking. Even though the government did not pay much attention to its education, it initiated reforms to improve it.

Danny’s responses to his group members showed his dialectic and dialogical skills. Also, as a WeChat discussion participant, he displayed his willingness and effort to improve his L2 competence by using diverse discourse markers and various compound-complex sentences. As he did in the last piece of writing, Danny used a clear argumentative structure to discuss with his leading discussant. He first agreed with Hongjun, but he gradually unfolded his persuasive thinking process. The interactions with Hongjun helped Danny identify himself as a critical thinker and competent L2 writer.

In Danny’s response to Lihua’s leading discussion on language and culture, he wrote “这个真的不好说” (It is hard to say) to express his uncertainty about Lihua’s question that it was good or bad if English dominated this world. He might not be interested in this topic; or he might not be able to provide detailed input. Interestingly, at the end of this sentence, he added an emoji to lighten the discussion atmosphere. The combinations of English, Chinese, and the emoji genre not only illustrated diversity of communication and representation, but also demonstrated Danny’s creativity and flexibility. In this discussion, Danny identified himself as a relaxed bilingual.

When he responded to Hongjun’s topic on testing, he held a negative attitude toward it. He claimed that examination might not be able to evaluate students’ real abilities. Teaching and learning to the test developed students’ skills for dealing with tests, because many students complained that the knowledge they learned in schools did not help much in their careers. Therefore, he suggested that “we need more experiences rather than examination [sic],” another

insightful argument. In this sentence, he used a deontic modality marker “need” to show his emphasis on experience, because he believed that having experiences was necessary. Also, he used the first person plural pronoun “we” to shorten the distance from his group members, which represented a collective voice, because “we” could be interpreted as all the students or the whole society. Again, Danny demonstrated his opposition to the test.

The organization of this piece was cohesive. He first pointed out the function of testing: a way to test students’ performance. Then, he used the transition word “however” to convey his opposition by giving an example: students’ complaint about what they learned was not useful for their careers. In the end, he expressed his position; experiences were more important than examinations. His text messages developed his identities as a critical, dialogical thinker and persuasive discussant. And also he was a capable L2 user. He constantly interacted with his smartphone, the websites, and his group members to fashion multilayered and dynamic identities.

### **Data from the Third Interview**

#### **Strategies for Avoiding Embarrassment**

Danny attributed his embarrassing encounters at the restaurants and the grocery store to his poor English listening and speaking level, especially his speaking, so he decided to improve his oral English skills by seizing and creating every opportunity to communicate. For example,

In class, I grab every chance to chat with my instructors; sometimes I create opportunities to talk to them. In group discussion, I tried very hard to practice listening and speaking.  
(Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

After class, Danny also endeavored to practice communicative abilities, such as initiating conversations with his international classmates and friends. He went to the study center (the language lab) daily to dialogue with his instructors. He listened carefully to how they talked and

mimicked the ways they pronounced words. Practicing speaking and listening online was another way to improve his oral English. Danny often visited some websites tailored for ESL students to exercise basic linguistic skills. He considered his limited vocabulary as one of reasons for his low level of speaking and listening skills, so he developed strategies for expanding his vocabulary as well. He stated, “I downloaded the Youdao dictionary (有道词典) (a search engine established by Chinese NetEase, which combines a dictionary with websites, videos, audios, and web visitors’ reviews) to my phone. As long as I find unknown words, I check my Youdao dictionary immediately.”

In addition, Danny learned authentic and colloquial English by making American friends.

He noted,

I often play ping-pong, badminton, and tennis with them (American friends). I learned authentic English, such as “What’s up?” and how to respond to “what’s up?” It is necessary to talk to local people in this environment to know how they greet each other and make jokes. (Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny believed that watching American and British TV shows and English movies improved his speaking and listening abilities significantly. He reported,

Recently, I have watched *House of Cards* and *Downton Abbey*. Watching a movie in a movie theater is very helpful for my listening too. There are no subtitles, so I have to listen very carefully. I learned a lot of English slangs, which are helpful for my daily communication. (Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny claimed that his preparation for the IELTS test was helpful to hone his oral communicative skills as well. He paid attention to road signs and billboards to immerse himself in his linguistic surroundings and to familiarize himself with daily and common English expressions.

**Smartphone and English learning.** Danny viewed his smart phone as an indispensable tool for his English learning, especially for expanding his vocabulary. He described,

I mainly use my phone to look up words by using the Youdao dictionary. I type word by word to learn pronunciations and meanings. While I am typing a word on my phone, I memorize its spelling. For example, this morning I learned a lot of words, such as “praise and grace”. As long as I have time, I take out my phone to review old words and study new ones. (Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

In addition to using his smartphone to improve vocabulary, Danny also used it to google pictures and videos for communication and class presentations. Most of time, Danny used Google and the Youdao dictionary to collect information and learn English. He also used a Chinese search engine Baidubaike to search for information regarding Chinese culture and history if necessary. For example, “last time, my instructor asked us to search for a Chinese traditional holiday: Dragon Boat Festival. I got so much information about this festival.” Danny claimed that he used his smart phone to study English anytime and anywhere, because it was convenient and helpful. He said, “I will not carry a thick dictionary with me, because it looks stupid and is not convenient.” He also used his phone to take photos of his instructors’ instructions on white boards and on the screen of the projector when he was in class, which helped him review what had been taught.

***Motivation of and inspiration for WeChat leading discussion.*** Danny was motivated to deliberately prepare for a leading discussion on WeChat by his responsibility as a discussion leader. He reported,

My responsibility forced me to prepare well for each topic, because I was a discussion leader. I had to set an example for them. If my topic was not novel, or meaningful, nobody would not follow me. Also, if my writing did not make sense, my group members would lose interest in my topic. So I had to be very careful to prepare a discussion (Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny accredited his skills for leading a discussion to his class presentations. He explained,

In speaking and listening classes, we always do presentations. The preparation for a presentation is a process of collecting and processing information. I visit various websites to look for relevant information. So, when I took part in this discussion, I just did what I learned from my presentations. (Interview with Danny, June 26<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny was a L2 learner who knew how to use the ability he gained from formal learning for informal learning and communication. He was good at searching for various kinds of resources online to engage his group members in this WeChat group discussion, such as written texts, pictures, videos, and audio materials. He added, “when I was leading a discussion, I went to TED Talks.com a lot to search for new and interesting topics. And then picked the best one to invite my group members to discuss it.” The visit to TED Talks increased opportunities for Danny to select a suitable and meaningful topic for the WeChat discussion.

## CHAPTER VI:

### LIHUA

#### **Data from the First Interview**

##### **Chinese Name and Self-conception**

Lihua was 19 years old, a male Chinese student from a working class family, which was not common among Chinese ELI students, because most Chinese international students were from nascent wealthy families (Stevens, 2012). However, Lihua's presence at this university could be explained by the following three reasons. First, Lihua failed the Chinese Gaokao, which means that he lost the only way to go to college there. Even though he could have attended a vocational school for his future career in China, he would not have opportunities for better social mobility. Secondly, education in China is highly valued, which is evidenced by a saying: "many pursuits are consequential, but education outweighs them all". Chinese parents consider that "education is the key to a family's prosperity and happiness" (Wang, 2016, p. 611), so the more education their children secure, the better future they will have. Thirdly, Lihua's parents believed that Chinese higher education was not as good as American's, so they sent Lihua to America for his higher education. Lihua explained,

My parents believe that American education is better than Chinese education. If I study here, I have more opportunities. In china, competition is fierce. I failed the Chinese Gaokao, so it was very hard for me to get into a university. Even if I were admitted to a university, I could not get into a good program. So my parents and my relatives encouraged me to come here to study English. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Interestingly, Lihua did not want to talk about his real name given by his parents; he named himself as Lihua, because

when I was in high school, my English teacher always asked all of us to use the same name, Lihua, to write English letters to somebody else. So I want to use this name to ridicule my high school English teaching. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

It appeared that the name Lihua was a derision of English teaching in his high school. It also indicated his dissatisfaction and disappointment with his English teachers, who should be partly blamed for his failure in the Chinese Gaokao and “dumb and deaf” English. He reported,

My English teachers emphasized memorization and drills, de-emphasized communicative skills, because their teaching was highly test-driven. Even though I have been studying English since elementary school, I am still unable to communicate with Americans. I studied “dumb and deaf” English, which is ridiculous. My English teachers taught me how to take tests, but they did not care if I had the ability to use English. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

It appears that his name indexed his deficiency in English communicative competence, but it in fact motivated him to invest in L2 literacies practices, because he strove to improve his English proficiency. In his self- introduction, Lihua viewed himself as a Gaokao failure and used the fact as a motivation to change his marginalized identity (he was marginalized in China, because of his failing in Gaokao). Lihua perceived himself as goal-oriented, which originated from his ambition and his family’s expectation. He was the only hope for his family; his parents placed all of their hope on him. Unfortunately, he failed Gaokao, which was a shame for him and his family, but he had a strong desire to regain the mianzi (face). He explained: “I am confident and active in class. I must be like this, because I am here to study English.” He used the modal verb “must” to signify his familial responsibilities.

Lihua, this Chinese name, as a symbolic artifact, held multiple meanings, all of which were assigned by Lihua himself and derived by Lihua from his social interactions (Blumer, 1969). These meanings were used and revised as vehicles for guidance, warnings, and formation of action and performance when Lihua studied English in this ELI setting. Lihua’s Chinese name indicated his past selves in China, illustrated his current identities, and designated his future

selves. His frequent interactions with his Chinese name shaped his ongoing and dynamic identities.

### **Keepsake: A Nail File**

Lihua's only keepsake, a nail file, exemplified his father's love and hope for him. Lihua noted,

I brought a nail file with me. My dad made it by hand. He thought the old one was not easy to use. I thought my dad was too fussy. It was not necessary to make a new one. But he insisted on making it. The new one is much better than the old one. When I was packing my suitcase at home, my dad asked me to take it with me. I brought it here. Every time when I use it I feel like I am at home. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)



*Figure 7.* Lihua's nail file

This nail file was red and made of hard sand paper, which looked simple and inconspicuous, but it was special and important to Lihua, because it “symbolizes and represents relationships and events that matter” (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 1). This nail file looks really new, as it was made just before Lihua came to America. Also, Lihua cherished it very much. This nail file was an embodiment of his father's deep affection for him. His father could have bought him one in a store, but he insisted on making a new one. The nail file, as a material artifact, evoked Lihua's beautiful memory about his father, his family in China, all of which implied the connection with his home, a place full of love and care. The nail file was also a powerful pull on identity (Pahl & Rowsell, 2010, p. 1).

Lihua established meanings of the nail file from interactions with his father. As Lihua interacted in his daily life, his use of the nail file carried his family connections into his present construction of his identity, through its material representation of his history, being constantly recast in the present (Blumer, 1969). Lihua, as a meaning maker, understood why his father made him this red nail file. He understood that his father placed hope on him. He could not disappoint his father and his family, because he was the only child. This nail file empowered Lihua to engage in L2 literacies practices to get rid of the yoke of the “dumb and deaf” English. Even as Lihua’s nail file represented his history in China, it also represented his pursuit of his dream in America. The meanings imbued in the gift from his father showed him possibilities for future success as a diligent and responsible L2 learner.

### **Language Barriers and Embarrassment**

Lihua’s “deaf and dumb” English resulted in a difficulty in understanding announcements at an airport. He stated,

When I was at the Chicago airport, I heard some announcements, but I did not quite understand them. I asked nine officers at the airport to see if my flight had been changed. After asking eight officers, I figured out that I needed to go to terminal 3 to wait for my flight instead of terminal 2. I rode a train to terminal 3. I was waiting at gate 19. My flight was going to fly in 15 minutes, but the gate was still closed. I got panicked. I asked the officer at the gate and was told that the gate was changed to gate 12 instead of gate 19. I ran to gate 12 with my carry-ons. As soon as I got onto the plane, the gate was closed. It was really embarrassing, but I did not miss my flight. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Asking nine officers for clarifications not only showed Lihua’s limited speech comprehension, but also implied his identity as an incompetent L2 user; however, the situation did not discourage him. Initiating nine conversations helped him successfully get on board, which also demonstrated his great courage and persistence. As he stated in the interview, “I felt embarrassed, but I was not really sad. Because I know my English is not good, that is why I came here to study.”

Knowing himself and trying to change the past-self encouraged him to talk with those officers at the airport. In addition, that particular situation forced him to do so. His statement was also aligned with his self-conception: “I am goal-oriented.” Lihua did not see the difficulty in communication at the airport as unsurmountable. Instead, it inspired him to use social, cognitive, and cultural skills to facilitate him to communicate with those officers.

### **Culturally Speaking**

According to van Lier (2004), language learning takes place “in a context of communication and interaction” (p. 133), so it is important for L2 learners to gain access to local community of practices in order to develop memberships and accumulate cultural and linguistic capital.

Lihua’s participation in Culturally Speaking provided him with multiple opportunities to interact and communicate with his conversational partners. The Culturally Speaking activity functioned as a community of practice in which Lihua had chance to develop a sense of himself, because “learning involves the (re)construction of identities” (Swain & Deters, 2007). His L2 literacies practices in this community constituted his identity through concrete markers of membership, but primarily through the “forms of competence that it entails” (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 152). For example,

I think Culturally Speaking was good for my English learning... The main purpose was to practice speaking and listening. The topics of conversation were broad, including family, technology, culture, computer, and video games. One time we talked about polygamy, but I did not know the word by that time. I figured it out by the conversation with my American partner and my international partner. I think this activity was interesting. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

As a new comer, Lihua did not have a rich linguistic repertoire, so he was confused about the meaning of the word “polygamy,” but he understood it by participating in the conversation with his American partner who was a competent native speaker and his international partner who

was a culture representative. He also referred to the conversational context to understand this word. The conversation of triad mirrored Bakhtin's (1981) conceptualization of language learning; that is, meanings are historically and socially constructed. Meaning occurs through dialogical interactions, in which Lihua was scaffolded by the more knowledgeable members of the social group. Engagement in Culturally Speaking had the potential for Lihua to not only acquire cultural knowledge and linguistic skills, but also broaden his horizon on interdisciplinary. When Lihua involved in this conversation, he voiced who he was and how he interacted with his conversational partners as an active meaning negotiator in this community of practice. Also, interactions and engagement in this community might have helped him build more social networks full of possibilities for cultural, linguistic, and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977). The involvement in Culturally Speaking could be understood as a move for Lihua to improve his L2 literacies skills in order to change his assigned identity as an incompetent L2 user.

### **Roomed with Americans**

Roomed with three American students, Lihua had more chance to practice L2 literacies, which can be seen as another move for language acquisition and socialization. He stated,

I had three American roommates before. Sometimes we had lunch together, but it was hard to talk to my American roommates. For example, I wanted to tell them a story or what happened to me, but I did not know how to say some words. I did not know how to organize a sentence. Sometimes I needed to use three or four sentences to explain one word to them. I liked to observe how they did certain things. One day, I wanted to clean up my bedroom, so I asked one of my roommates to lend me the vacuum cleaner, because I saw a student come to borrow it from him one day. My roommate said: "it is over there. You can use it whenever you want. It doesn't belong to me." I realized that the cleaner is for three of us. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Even though limited vocabulary and a struggle to organize sentences reduced Lihua's opportunities to participate in oral interactions, observing his roommates' activities was a way to

prepare for the next participation in conversation, which became an instrument for his fully fledged and more proficient member of this dormitory community (Duff, 2002). This episode showed that Lihua was a smart English learner. Although verbal communication is a predominant way for L2 literacies practice, other strategies, such as observation, listening, mimicking, and gesturing are alternatives to create opportunities to learn. The initiative of the conversation with his American roommate seemed challenging, but beneficial. This initiative created access to the community of L2 practice, because language is structured and emergent, and is acquired through social interaction (Bakhtin, 1981). Even though it was difficult to initiate a conversation with his roommates, Lihua made endeavors to create opportunities to interact with them, which again confirmed his self-conception: “I am goal-oriented.” He tried hard to change his “deaf and dumb” English.

Lihua asked his roommate for permission to watch a movie together, which was an important opportunity to not only improve linguistic skills, but also to enrich cultural knowledge. He wrote,

One night, my roommate David asked me: “Do you mind if I invite a friend to come over to watch a movie tonight?” I said no. I asked him if I could join them. He said yes. We watched a movie together. That was an English movie. Even though I did not totally understand it, I still enjoyed it. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Again, Lihua seized the chance immediately to immerse himself in this linguistic and cultural surroundings. Even though he was unable to understand the movie completely, he enjoyed it, and viewed it as a good chance for his exposure to this target culture and language environment.

## Participation in Mixed Groups

Like Danny, Lihua claimed space for speaking and for being heard in the mixed group. He constructed different identities in mixed groups as a learning activity participant and a learning leader to guide and encourage his group members to converse with each other. Positioned as a group leader, Lihua deliberately avoided silence by transitioning from one topic to another. He acted as a competent expert or teacher to scaffold less accomplished peers. For example,

Sometimes, I guide the topics and encourage them to talk when we are in a group discussion. When everybody was shy and quiet, I started to talk. After finishing one topic, I transition to another. If necessary, I would lead my group members to discuss something else to avoid silence. The more capable you are; the more responsibility you have to take. They trust me, because I always share my ideas with them. They expect me to write my answers on the white board all the time. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Lihua's participation in the mixed group allowed him to reveal and develop aspects of his identities, abilities, responsibilities, and interests, in addition to his linguistic knowledge (Duff, 2002). Lihua perceived the mixed group as a safe place to build a sense of belonging because "there is no discrimination here, because we are all internationals". This statement also indicated that the mixed group served as a mechanism for Lihua to shape his own L2 acquisition and socialization.

Lihua's communication with his international peers in class afforded a platform to explore both Chinese culture and his peers' cultures, through which he performed as a culture broker. He said he introduced Chinese traditional music to his classmates. He selected three instruments, including Suona, Erhu, and Pipa. He explained,

I did a lot of research on these three and learned that Suona expresses happiness, Erhu expresses sadness, and Pipa expresses joy sometimes, which helped me explore more about Chinese music, musicians, and instruments. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Lihua stated that he was proud of himself and his country, because he expanded his culture to the world by using English. He also claimed that he had chance to know about things from others' cultures, such as Japanese cartoons, sushi, kneeling, and tatami.

The role of the culture broker reinforced his cultural identity. Lihua indicated that the engagement in the mixed group transformed him from a Gaokao failure to a Chinese cultural representative. In addition, the participation in L2 literacies practices triggered his interest in exotic cultures, which raised his awareness of multiculturalism and further increased his respect for and appreciation of diverse cultures. The inclusive classroom discourse foregrounded the differences and interconnectedness among Lihua and his international peers, which in turn enriched his linguistic and cultural knowledge as evidenced by the following comment by Lihua.

It is really hard to communicate sometimes because we all have strong accents. One day, I asked one of my classmate: "do you know the answers to the first question?" He said: "I have no idea what the answers to the fourth question." However, I always carry a pen and notebook with me to write down what I said and what they said when we have conversations, which minimizes misunderstandings. Since I do not have a big vocabulary, I draw pictures or use my phone to search for pictures or videos to help understand. (Interview with Lihua, May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Strong accents seemed to hinder the conversations between ELI students, because it increased difficulty in understanding each other, but Lihua used multiple tools and modes to improve the conversational situation. He carried a pen and a notebook to write down unintelligible words and sentences to ask for clarifications. Also, he used his phone to show his interlocutors pictures and videos to make him understood. The use of multimodality in negotiation of meaning was helpful for facilitating conversations.

## Data from Class Observations and Field Notes

### Lihua's Three Classes

The researcher observed Lihua's three classes, including listening and speaking, reading and writing, and structure. Lihua always sat in the front row or the middle of the classroom, because he said that he could engage his instructors' attention. Also, he had more opportunities to interact with his instructors. Except for interaction with his instructors, he actively participated in group discussions, especially in his reading and writing class. In the section below, the research will discuss each class in turn.

**Listening and speaking.** The listening and speaking class included two parts, one focused on listening by testing students' speech comprehension; the other on speaking, during which each student gave a 2-3 minute presentation to the class.

There were ten international students in Lihua's listening and speaking class, including two Saudi Arabian female students, one Turkish female student, one Japanese female student, one Turkish male student, one Kuwaiti male student, two Chinese male students, one Saudi Arabian male student, and one Yemeni male student. The instructor was a young American male, who gave the class a small listening quiz and asked each student to briefly talk about their presentations. The listening practice was about marketing. It lasted 6-10 minutes. Before playing the audio, the instructor asked everybody to be ready to take notes. After the first round listening, students started answering 10 questions based on the audio. Lihua scored 10 points of 10. The second section of this class was for students to talk about their presentation topics. Lihua's talk was related to mechanical engineering. He looked nervous even though he was prepared for it.

**Reading and writing.** The reading and writing class was structured to help students practice reading comprehension by orally analyzing a micro-novel *The Chaser* by John Collier,

including learning vocabulary according to the context and understanding the content of this novel by discussing short answer questions. There were eight international students in Lihua's reading and writing class, including two Saudi Arabian female students, one Turkish male student and one Turkish female student, and four Chinese male students. His instructor was a middle aged American male, who guided the class to read this novel. The instructor gave out the reading materials (see Appendix C) to the class and said: "I am going to read the story to you. If you see a word that you do not know, please mark it." While the instructor was reading the story, the students were marking new words. After reading, the instructor asked the class (T refers to the instructor; L means Lihua):

T: What is love?

L: What? It is a kind of feeling. A positive feeling.

T: Get into pairs and discuss the words you marked with your group members.

Lihua joined an Arabian female classmate to discuss the marked words. He asked his learning partner: "Do you know what creaky stairs mean?" She told him and he wrote down its meaning on the margin of the reading material. The instructor asked the class: "What does the word *imperceptible* mean?" Lihua answered: "It means that we are not able to understand."

T: A good guess, but in this context it means differently. Can you refer to the context?

L: it is not detectable?

T: Excellent!

In this class, Lihua answered 20 questions, which not only showed his activity in class interactions, but also demonstrated his L2 learning skills and trajectories. His participation in the dialogue expanded his vocabulary, honed his thinking ability, and increased his oral capacity.

**Structure.** This structure class was about modal verbs for possibilities, such as must, could, might, and may, instructed in a fashion of question-answer-sequence. Lihua's structure class setting was the same as Danny's. There were ten international students, including three Chinese male students, three Saudi Arabian male students, one Norwegian male student, two Turkish female students, and one Japanese male student. His instructor was a middle-aged American male.

In the beginning of the class, the instructor asked the students about their weekend. Lihua said that he was too busy to attend any entertainment, but he used the wrong tense: "I am too busy." His instructor recast Lihua's sentence: "You mean you were too busy?" Lihua said, "Yes. You are right. I was too busy." When the instructor asked the class about somebody's absence from the class. Lihua said, "He could have gotten a flu." His instructor corrected him again by saying that "He could have got the flu." Lihua repeated what his teacher said and wrote down what he just said. In the following interactions with his instructor, Lihua made another two mistakes and his instructor corrected him again.

Lihua's structure class was interactive and engaging. He actively engaged in question-answer-sequence with his instructor. The data showed that Lihua did not parrot his instructor, but internalized the grammatical knowledge through mediated dialogue with his instructor. Lihua's internalization confirmed Lantolf and Throne's (2007) theory of corrective feedback and negotiation, which contends that "[development] in this context is the internalization of the mediation that is dialogically negotiated between the learner and others that results in enhanced self-regulation" (P. 211). The mediational dialogue between Lihua and his structure instructor facilitated Lihua's "developmental progression from other-regulation to self-regulation" (p. 211).

Lihua's active participation in class interaction empowered him to develop his identity as a proactive and fast L2 learner.

Summing up, Lihua's engagement in these three classes can be expressed through the metaphors of his Chinese name and his keepsake. In other words, he acted and reacted in class involvement according to what his name indicated and his keepsake implied. It also can be interpreted as concretization of his "goal-oriented" personality. Lihua's classes also had pedagogical implications, which the researcher will discuss in Chapter IX.

### **Data from the Second Interview**

#### **A 30-Day Project**

Like Danny, Lihua claimed that his former listening and speaking class was interesting, engaging, and very helpful. Both Lihua and Danny were in the same class when they first attended this ELI program, so he also conducted a 30-day project, which was running 30 miles in 30 days. He said that he decided to run one mile a day and document the experience and feelings of this process and upload it to Facebook every Sunday night. The last part of this project was to present the process and outcome of this challenge. Before the presentation, he wrote a script like before. And then he made Power Point slides. Lihua described his preparation for the presentation:

The first slide of my PPT was a picture of an obese sleeping boy, through which I wanted to accentuate my topic: Keep Fit. Also, I wanted to use it to explain the word "adiposis," which was hard to understand. Even though I explained it by using words, I have a strong accent, so I was afraid that my classmates might not be able to understand me. I contemplated using a picture of a half-naked man with many muscles to emphasize my topic again, but I thought that would be inappropriate, because I might offend my Muslim female classmates. Eventually I used written words in bold black font instead. After designing my PPT, I started practicing my presentation. I recorded my speech and listened to it and recorded it again and again. I practiced about 40 times until I was content with my pronunciation. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The 30-day project was a tremendous challenge for Lihua, not just because it required physical endeavors, but also demanded cognitive initiatives. Documenting the experience and feelings of this process and uploading it to Facebook was a challenge. Also, presenting this project in class was another. Even though the whole project was challenging, Lihua finished it successfully. He used PowerPoint to help him not only report what he experienced in the last 30 days, but also to help him represent himself in the class community of practice. Lihua's presentation echoes van Lier's (2000) ecological perspective on L2 learning, which suggests that meaning-making includes linguistic forms and semiotic ways, such as drawings, artifacts, and gestures, and so on.

In addition, Lihua's case supported Wenger's (1998) theory of community of practice; that is, participation is a source of identity. Lihua's well designed presentation illustrated his willingness to become a more competent group member, because he had a strong desire for recognition, security, and affiliation. He said that "I did a good job on the presentation. I just want to speak like a TED presenter." This imagined identity emphasized the importance of agency in regulating his investment in practicing linguistic competence. The imagined identity became his goal, which guided and motivated his efforts. The language-mediated class activity encouraged him to "[look] at an apple seed and [see] a tree" (Wenger, 1998, p. 176). Also, his consideration of his Muslim classmate's religion showed him to be a respectful person.

Lihua's class presentations not only enhanced his linguistic competence in terms of grammar and pronunciation, but also increased his self-esteem and self-efficacy, as well as formed his identity as a perfection. He reported,

I still remember the first time when I was presenting a project; I was scared to death, because I never did that when I was in China. I only needed to talk for 3-4 minutes, but I prepared for it very long during every step, including choosing a topic, searching for the relevant information, writing a two-page script, and memorizing the script. I am a

perfection, so I do not want to make any mistakes, which put so much pressure on me. But it was rewarding. In the end, I got 96 out of 100. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The participation in class presentation confirmed Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of situated learning; that is, "learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities--it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person" (p. 53). In the process of presentation, Lihua tried to realize his desire to become perfect. The class presentation functioned as an affordance for him to secure multiple abilities to materialize his fulfillment as a whole person in the class discourse.

### **Lihua's Perception of the WeChat Discussion**

Like Danny, Lihua considered that WeChat discussion improved his L2 literacies skills, especially writing competence. He said when he led a discussion, he wrote a draft of a summary on a topic. And then he checked the grammar, cohesion, and organization. He did not want to make mistakes, because he was the leading discussant. He always used a special tool download in his phone to correct grammatical errors to make sure that grammar was accurate. After reading the draft several times to make sure that the writing was clear, he posted the summary to WeChat. He stated,

Being a discussion leader improved my ability to write summaries. The language we use is different from what we use in the chat rooms, which is more formal and academic. Texting and following text messages are helpful for my grammar as well, which is beneficial for writing short essays. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Lihua's statement mirrored the finding of Allen et al. (2014) that internet-mediated writing strategies led to an increase in writing affect, including motivation, involvement, perceived performance, and actual performance.

Not only did WeChat discussion improved Lihua's writing skills, but also his other linguistic and thinking competencies as indicated by his reflections below,

Even though we only posted one or two sentences on WeChat sometimes, we could trigger a debate, which piques inspirations and wise sparks. Participating in discussing on WeChat helps me gain knowledge. It is much better than individual learning, because group discussion not only invites group interactions, but also practices thinking skills, which encourages me to think differently, because everybody is different and has different perspectives, different family backgrounds, and different social and cultural experiences. It also inspires me to think creatively, because I do not want to copy other's ideas, which motivates me to think deeper to avoid repetition and similarity. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Also, WeChat discussion made Lihua a responsible discussion leader. He added,

I think I have a strong sense of responsibility when I am a discussion leader. I am concerned about selecting a topic. I think a good topic should be novel, meaningful, and interesting. As a leading discussant, I pay close attention to my members' responses, because I can tell if I did a good job through reading their postings. I must be like a leader. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

As a smartphone-networked discussion participant, Lihua acted differently from how he performed as a discussion leader. He said: "as a text message follower, I read other's messages and express my own opinions." However, the discourse analysis showed that Lihua positioned himself as an active and competent L2 writer, divergent thinker, and co-constructor of meaning.

**Data from WeChat exchanges.** Designing a discussion topic involved the orchestration of existing resources to achieve discussants' communicative purpose. When leading a discussion, the participants not only developed their L2 literacies, in terms of listening, reading, and writing, but also exercised their agency in a smartphone, network-mediated discourse to perform as meaning designers and makers. The section below will detail how Lihua interacted with his group members by texting his perspectives to fashion textual selves.

**Identity as a leader.** Lihua led two discussions in this WeChat group. The first one, language, triggered a hot debate. He wrote nine lines to describe the phenomenon of popularity of English in the world. In the first sentence, he used a declarative statement: "Increasingly people choose English as their second language" to introduce his topic. In the following three

sentences, he stated the fact that English is “the world’s most widely spoken second language” illustrated by specific numbers of English speaking people and countries. And then he elaborated his argument by saying that “[English] became the most popular language in the world.” In the next sentence, he used a sentence connector “however” to set up a contrast between English and some dying minority languages. In the end of this piece of text message, he posed three questions by asking “Whether English will dominate the world... What do you think about this problem? Is that good or bad?”

Unlike Danny, Lihua did not use a TED Talk to initiate a discussion; instead, he selected a topic that was tightly related to his academic and everyday life, which had the potential to pique the group interest, because his group members were all L2 learners. Even though his group members were immersed in this English learning environment, they might not be aware of the popularity of English, so Lihua gave his group members detailed contextual and intertextual information about English as a second language. And then he invited his group members to join him to discuss this topic.

Hongjun took the first turn to respond to Lihua’s prompt. He argued that Darwin’s evolutionary theory also applies to language; that is, if speaking a language represented privileges, people would learn and study that language. Lihua showed his agreement with Hongjun by saying that “Yes, I agree with you, but from a cultural point of view...” It appears that Lihua agreed with Hongjun, but in fact, he did not agree with him, because Lihua was concerned about diversity of language and culture. He argued that “The disappearance of language can destroy the cultural diversity,” because “Language always stands by the culture of a country.” Here, Lihua related language to culture, because he held that preserving a language

was to preserve a culture. Danny used both Chinese and English to express his uncertainty about this discussion: “这个真不好说。 It is hard to say.”

After reading the other two members' responses, Lihua continued his argument: “Each language has its charm. You should learn to accept and appreciate it.” These two sentences demonstrated Lihua's position: people should preserve their unique languages and cultures. He used the deontic modality marker “should” to urge people to take the responsibility to embrace and respect diverse languages and cultures. The marker “should” also signaled an evaluative statement, which was desirable, because this world needs diversity. Lihua's insistence on his position being the right one elicited an equivocal “maybe” from Danny.

After reading Danny's response, Lihua went one step further to point out: “As we all know, some ancient culture have [sic] already disappeared in Africa. Maybe we never know them, but it does not mean they do [sic] not exist.” In this piece of writing, Lihua again reinforced his argument on preserving cultural and linguistic diversity by giving a specific example. This text message conveyed Lihua's deep feelings about humans' loss because of people's unawareness of the importance of preserving cultures and languages. At the end of this round of discussion, Danny voiced that “everything will change” to show his implicit disagreement with Lihua.

Lihua's topic on language received eight responses including his own four texts. Apparently, his topic was interesting, because everybody in this group actively participated in this discussion, especially Danny. In addition, Lihua's writing skills and argumentative abilities were impressive. Even though he did not convince his group members to accept his opinions, his insistent argument not only showed his logical thinking and reasoning skills, but also displayed his persistence and resilience. Through the textual interactions with his group members, Lihua

constructed multiple identities as an advocate of cultural and linguistic diversity, a competent L2 writer, a persuasive and logical debater, an information provider, and an argument solicitor.

In his another leading discussion, Lihua advocated learning English in daily life. He wrote: “Do you know the full name of KFC? Do you know the correct pronunciation of MacDonald’s? ... Therefore, I suppose we should learn English from our daily lives if we want to make our English closer to the native speaker of English [sic].” Lihua started this topic by asking two questions to engage his group members’ attention to this discussion. And then he gave several examples to stress the importance of pronunciation of brand names in our daily conversations. In the last sentence, he used the deontic modality marker “should” again to emphasize his authority as a discussion leader. He wrote eight lines to express his opinion, but he only received two very short responses. He indicated that he felt a sense of failure in the follow up interview.

***Identity as a discussant.*** In Lihua’s long response to Danny’s topic on virtual reality, he used an evaluative statement to show his interest in this topic first and a compound adjective “epoch-making” to stress the significance of virtual reality. He wrote, “I am really interested in the virtual reality” and “it’s an epoch-making product.” Lihua’s affective evaluation confirmed the meaningfulness of this topic, which implicitly praised Danny’s fine and deliberative selection of this topic. In the following three sentences, Lihua used compound-complex sentences to elaborate on his unfamiliarity with the influence of virtual reality on education. For example, he used a sentence connector “however” to make a contrast between his familiarity and unfamiliarity with virtual reality. He wrote, “However, I have hardly ever thought it could be used as a teaching method because all the people I know who...” He used another sentence connector “in addition” and “and” to display additional information about his unawareness of

virtual reality in education and his preference for physical books and tools instead of e-books or [sic] virtual laboratory, because “paper and pen made me feel more reliable.” He used “Nevertheless” to set up a contrast between what he watched in the video and what he thought in reality. In the end, he indicated that he might change his attitude toward virtual reality in education, because the video showed that virtual reality did revolutionize the science class.

Lihua was the first one to respond to Danny’s leading discussion, which showed his active participation in the smartphone, network-mediated interactions. He foregrounded his experience about virtual reality in entertainment, which was against what the video showed and Danny discussed. However, the video opened his eyes to a brand new world, which made him have a second thought about virtual reality. In this detailed response, Lihua used sophisticated social language to construct his identity as an academian (a novice one nonetheless) who had a good command of writing.

Lihua took the first turn to answer Hongjun’s question about examination. In this piece of writing, Lihua held a positive attitude toward testing, because “We can learn about our own shortcomings and some of the things that still need to be improved through the exam.” He used the transitional phrase “In addition” to give additional information by stating that “I suppose the examination is not only a kind of evaluation but also a good practice.” In the end, he claimed that the pressure from the exam could be converted into motivation. In this piece, Lihua demonstrated his strong affiliation to his statement by using the “I” statements of “I think” and “I suppose,” which accentuated his standpoint that testing was a good way to diagnose learning problems. He contended that testing was not only an evaluation, but also a practice. He also used the modal verbs “have to” and “can” to point out the necessity for taking tests and predicting the possibilities.

Lihua's social actions and practices in the mode of text fashioned his identities as an independent thinker because he did not agree with Danny and Hongjun on the topic of testing. He believed that testing had valuable functions, such as diagnosing learning problems, practicing what was taught, and motivating students to improve themselves. Also, his academic-like lexical items, such as "previous," "shortcomings," "effectively," and "integrate" and complex syntax "I think it's a good way to practice...I suppose the examination is not only...but also...", and very clear argumentative structures showed his advanced writing skills. The choices of expressions Lihua used such as personal pronouns, modality markers, and imperative mood promoted texturing self-identity, which echoed Fairclough's (2003) suggestion that "[the] texturing of identity is thoroughly embedded in the texturing of social relations" (p. 166).

### **Data from the Third Interview**

#### **Strategies for Avoiding Embarrassment**

Lihua claimed that his embarrassing experience at the airport resulted from language barriers, especially limited speaking and listening abilities, so he decided to attend Culturally Speaking to improve his oral English. He said, "I am goal-oriented. I hoped that attending Culturally Speaking could improve my speaking and listening. Actually, it was really helpful." In addition, he visited an English speaking and listening website every day, sometimes one hour a day; sometimes a half hour. His interactions with his American roommates familiarized him with colloquial English. He also expanded his vocabulary by memorizing words, reading emails, listening to popular songs, and watching movies. Interestingly, he paid close attention to his linguistic surroundings to enrich his language and cultural knowledge such as road signs and billboards. For example,

One day when I went to Montgomery to take the IELTS test, I saw a sign: 'one way,' which is one road in Chinese. I thought to myself: apparently, this is one road. Everybody

knows it. Why people put a sign here? And then I saw the same sign in many different places, which piqued my interest. I wanted to know what it really means, so I googled ‘one way’ on my phone and figured out that it means one direction road in Chinese. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

He also noticed that the advertisements for MacDonal’d’s on huge billboards said 2 for \$5 or 2 for \$2. He found other similar advertisements from different fast food restaurants. However, he did not know what they meant. He searched for explanations for these advertisements online and asked some senior Chinese students and found out that these advertisements showed the price of food. He also realized that names of American restaurants were interesting. He said, “A person’s name plus an apostrophe becomes a name of a restaurant. I guess it shows American culture.” The data showed that Lihua’s intentional English learning was based on his daily life. He excelled in observing his surroundings to explore and learn linguistic and cultural knowledge.

**Smartphone and English learning.** Lihua considered that his smart phone was a main auxiliary tool for studying English as it could assist him in various ways, such as looking up new words and checking grammatical errors. Lihua stated,

If I want to say a sentence, but I am not sure if it is right. I enter this sentence to my phone and then I check the Chinese translation. If the translation makes sense to me, I will use the sentence. If I do not know a word when I am reading, I just need to put my phone above this word, so the pronunciation and meaning of this word will appear on my phone. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016) (See Figure 8 for how Lihua used his smart phone to look up the word *occasionally*.)

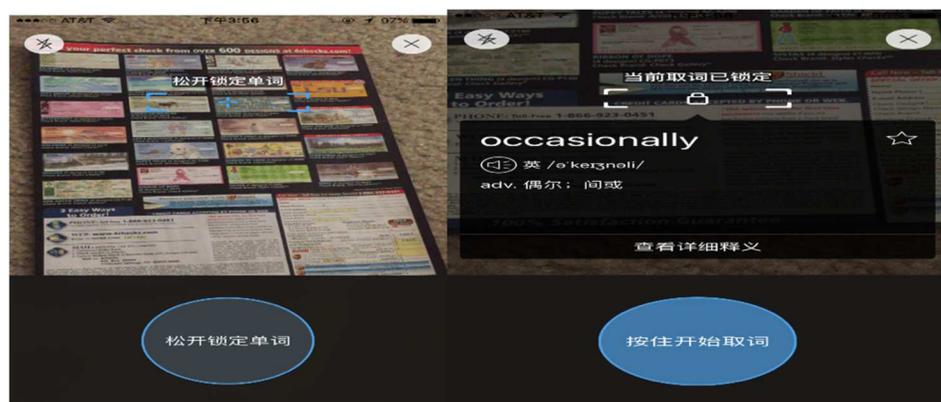


Figure 8. Lihua’s use of smart phone to look up a new word

Except for looking up words and checking grammar, Lihua used his smart phone to search for pictures on Baidubaike and TED Talks on Google to assist in communication with his international classmates. For instance,

When my Japanese classmate talked about Kabuki. I told him that it is similar to Peking Opera, but he had no idea what I was talking about. I googled Peking Opera on my phone and showed a picture to him. He understood me immediately. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Lihua's smart phone became a necessary tool for him to accumulate vocabulary and facilitate communication.

***Motivation of and inspiration for WeChat leading discussion.*** Lihua's motivation to actively participate in WeChat discussion sprang from his self-conception: 死要面子 (highly valuing his face), strong self-esteem, making a good impression upon his group members, his intention to be a successful discussion leader, and competition with Hongjun, because his English level was higher than Lihua's. To reach these goals, Lihua wrote beautiful summaries and texts to show his linguistic competence and insightfulness. He led two discussions, including language and culture and learning English from daily life. When the researcher asked him why he chose these two topics, he answered, "I was inspired by TED Talks and the Youdao dictionary." Lihua frequently visited TED Talks and the Youdao dictionary, all of which provided him with unlimited linguistic and cultural resources. He sophisticatedly integrated these materials into his WeChat discussion. For example,

Now that we are studying English here, we should know English and learn it very well. So I wanted to pick a topic that was related to language. I googled the word *English* on my phone, but I did not find anything interesting. And then I visited the website of Youdao dictionary. I found an interesting article that fit with my topic. It said that English has dominated this world, but some minority languages are dying. I decided to use this article as a source to lead a discussion. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Lihua's topic on language and culture triggered a debate, because it generated eight discussion exchanges, making it the most popular topic in this discussion group. He added, "I do not want to fail. If there were no people to follow me when I led a topic, I would feel a sense of frustration." So, he strove to select novel, meaningful, and interesting topics to enhance learning.

In addition to websites, Lihua was also inspired by his lived experience. He explained,

One day, when I was talking about American fast food with my international classmates in my speaking and listening class, I said I like one kind of beef hamburger in maidanglao (Chinese) (Macdonald's), but they did not understand me. I was surprised and anxious. I thought to myself: Macdonald's is very famous in the world. Why do not they know it? I took out my notebook and wrote a huge "M" on it. They saw it and said: "Oh, Macdonald's." I felt embarrassed. Even though I saw the big sign of Macdonald's almost everywhere, I did not pay attention to its pronunciation. I just know how to say it in Chinese. I was really embarrassed, so I decided to talk about this topic: learning English from our daily life. (Interview with Lihua, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Not only was Lihua good at collecting information from various websites, but also good at reflecting on his lived experience to create learning opportunities. More importantly, his embarrassing encounter did not discourage him; instead, it became an impetus for learning. In the end, Lihua concluded that the WeChat discussion offered a platform for increasing his knowledge and sparking valuable thinking.

## CHAPTER VII:

### HONGJUN

#### **Data from the First Interview**

##### **Chinese Name and Self-conception**

Hongjun was a 19-year-old Chinese male student, who had studied at the ELI for eight months when the study began. He was from a middle class family. Like Danny, Hongjun's name carried his family's expectations as well. He noted,

My Chinese first name is very unique, which combines my parents' first names. It also carries my parents and grandparents' hopes for me, because they want me to be like a big bird that can fly high and far someday. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun was expected to be ambitious and aggressive to realize his dream. He also shouldered his familial duty to bring them prosperity and happiness because he was the only child in his family. When he was given this name, Hongjun became hope for both himself and his family. His family already designed his future for him. Hongjun internalized his parents' hope, so he positioned himself as a confident and fast English learner. Hongjun's Chinese name attached special meanings by his parents guided his actions and behaviors, which echoed Blumer's (1969) argument that "it is the world of their objects with which people have to deal and toward which they develop their actions. It follows that in order to understand the action of people it is necessary to identify their world of objects..." (p. 11). Hongjun's Chinese name, as a symbolic artifact, was an object, which exemplified his past selves in China, represented his current selves in America, and predicted his future selves. His constant interaction with his Chinese name demonstrated an evolving process of identity formation.

Unlike Danny, Hongjun did not take the Chinese Gaokao when he was in China; instead he attended English classes at a preparatory school that specialized in preparing students for American universities. He explained, “I did not have to take Gaokao, because I wanted to study in America, my dreamland.” Hongjun was determined to improve his life through a good education, so he came to America to pursue his dream. Hongjun admired and had a high respect for his father’s success in business and administration because his father was a manager of after-sales service in a large company in Shanghai. He viewed his father as his role model, but he strove to outshine him. He explicated, “I think my dad is very successful compared to his classmates and colleagues, but I want to be better than him, because 青出于蓝而胜于蓝嘛 (Blue from indigo plant is deeper than its origin).”

### **Keepsake: A Parents’ Photo**

Hongjun brought his parents’ photo with him when he came to the United States. The photo was his only keepsake, which was important to him. This photo connected Hongjun and his parents. Because his first name combined his parents’ first names, it meant that this family was always together, even though Hongjun was far away from his home. He put his parents’ photo on his desk so that he could see them while he was studying. This photo was taken in a photo gallery in Shanghai before Hongjun came to America, which conjured up Hongjun’s memories about his parents and his life in China. This photo also comforted Hongjun when he was alone, because he said when he looked at the photo, he felt encouraged and heartened.

Hongjun’s keepsake, as a material artifact, was assigned meanings both by his parents and himself. He saw this photo as a special object, because it tightly tied Hongjun with his parents although they were far away from each other. Hongjun’s interpretation of this photo confirmed Blumer’s (1969) observation of symbolic interactionism. He stated that “[t]he nature

of an object—of any and every object—consists of the meaning that it has for the person for whom it is an object. This meaning sets the way in which he sees the object, the way in which he is prepared to act toward it, and the way in which he is ready to talk about it.” (p. 11) Hongjun could vividly feel his parents’ love when he was in America. Also, Hongjun understood how important the photo was to him, helping him focus on how he wanted to create his L2 student identity. More importantly, he strove to be the best to return his parents’ love for him, which was evidenced by the third interview in this chapter. These students all chose a different route to name themselves as L2 learners; these choices are indicative that teachers need to attend carefully to how students choose to name themselves in new contexts.

### **A Living Challenge**

Coming from a middle class family in Shanghai, Hounjun was not accustomed to the environment of a small university town. He descried his situation when he arrived at this town:

It (the small town) is totally different from Shanghai. The public transportation service is poor. I did not know there is a shuttle bus. I walked for hours to a grocery store to buy food in the first week after my arrival. It was very dangerous, because there were no sidewalks on the street. And the store is far from my apartment, so I only shopped once in the first week. I did not have enough food to eat afterwards. I was dying of hunger. In the second week I decided to walk to Walmart with my Chinese roommate. We walked for a while, but we quit, because it was too hot. And Walmart is really far. We almost got sunstroke. I was so depressed, because I had never faced this kind of problem. I wanted to tell my parents about my situation, but I did not, because they are far away from me. I have to stand on my own two feet. I do not want to let them down. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun faced “survival” challenges, but he decided to overcome them by himself. He strove to become an independent person because he was expected to achieve many accomplishments in the future. Hongjun’s resolution to be independent was bolstered by his name and also his parent’s photo. In this sense, Hongjun’s name, along with his parent’s photo, increased his self-confidence and reinforced his self-belief in efficacy.

## Language Barriers and Embarrassment

Like Danny, Hongjun felt a sense of loss when he was not able to understand a waiter in a fast food restaurant. He described his experience in that situation:

When I was ordering a meal at a fast food restaurant, I had problems to understand the waiter. I did not know how to say the names of the food I wanted. I used my figure to point to it on the menu. It was embarrassing. When the waiter asked “what drinks?” I got totally lost, so I asked him “what?” After his repetition of this phrase many times, I realized that he was asking what kind of drinks I wanted. I felt stupid when I could not understand him. I even did not understand a simple phrase. A few days later, I recognized that using “what” to ask for clarifications is not polite, but I used it many times. I should have said “excuse me?” or “pardon?” or something like that, but... The waiter might have thought that I was a very rude guy or did not have education. I felt terrible. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun’s inability to understand the waiter and voice his needs in this restaurant made him feel embarrassed. His realization of using “what” for clarifications made him feel impolite and uneducated, which was opposite to his name that symbolized his familial expectations. Hongjun was afraid of being positioned as a “rude guy” or an uneducated person because of his low level of English proficiency. He strove to act as a good L2 user, but his actual linguistic skills betrayed him. He thus felt a sense of disconnection because there was a gap between his ideal and the reality.

Like Danny, Hongjun also encountered difficulty in understanding a cashier at a grocery store. He noted,

One day when I was at a cashier machine to pay for the groceries, something was wrong with my bank card. The screen of the machine showed that my card was invalid. The cashier said something to me, but I did not understand her. I tried it again and again, but it still did not work. I got panicked. Fortunately, I could read the instructions on the screen and follow them. In the end I successfully paid for my groceries. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun’s difficulty in speech comprehension caused fear and anxiety, but his proficient reading skills enabled him to escape an embarrassing situation. His ability to read the instructions on the

screen allowed him to fix the problem, which helped him negotiate an able L2 user identity even though he had difficulty in conversations.

### **BCM Activities**

Hongjun participated in the local community of practice, BCM, Baptist Campus Ministries, to create access to not only building social networks, but also obtaining material and symbolic capital. He stated,

I did not take part in Coffee Hours or Culturally Speaking, but attended BCM activities before this May. I went there every Thursday to practice speaking and listening. It was helpful for learning English and learning about the American culture. For example, I was told about American holidays, like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter. Also, I was taken to the baseball field to watch games and listen to the explanation of the rules... The conversations were helpful for me to deepen my understanding of American culture. I am not afraid of making grammatical errors, because I went there to study English. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

As a novice in this community of practice, Hongjun's linguistic performance was mediated and enhanced by those native speakers. Participation in the BCM activities provided Hongjun with opportunities to become an active and full participant in this particular group. Hongjun's situated learning in this community also demonstrated "the dialectic relationship between the acquisition of language and culture, and the importance of human agency in the acquisition process" (Swain & Deters, 2007, p. 824).

### **Participation in Mixed Groups**

The mixed group L2 learning situated Hongjun in a rich and diverse linguistic and cultural community, through which Hongjun not only honed his L2 listening and speaking skills. It also opened his eyes to a world where people lived different lives with different cultures, traditions, values, and ideologies. Hongjun noted,

Mixed group discussions help me know about other cultures. For example, my Mexican classmate showed me all kinds of Mexican ponchos on his phone. I asked my Mexican classmate: "what are they made of? How are they made? When do people wear it?" My

Mexican friend told me that those are made of linen. People wear them on holidays. I think the ponchos are really beautiful and I want to buy one and take it back to China as a souvenir. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The mixed group offered Hongjun opportunities to become a responsible person. He explained,

I also told my partners about Chinese culture, traditions, and values. I introduced Chinese unique cultural features and practices, like meanings of names, proverbs, and so on. Before I told my group about China, I did research to make sure everything was correct. I wanted them to know I am a real authority of Chinese culture. I have the duty to tell them what is true about China and what is not. I have a sense of responsibility. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun was both a novice learner and an expert learner in the mixed group. He scaffolded less competent classmates to learn; in the meanwhile, he was mediated by his competent classmates to develop symbolic competence. All his classmates including Hongjun himself were cultural representatives that were constitutive and constituted the social milieu which functioned as affordances (Kress, 2003; van Lier, 2004) for L2 learning and acquisition. Mixed group learning spoke to the complex interactions between individuals acting with mediational tools and the sociocultural context (Swain & Deters, 2007).

Hongjun claimed that his classmates' strong accents and their limited vocabulary increased difficulty in communication. However, he used his smart phone to facilitate the verbal interaction with his classmates. Hongjun described,

When I speak English, I try to speak clearly, slowly, and correctly to make myself understood, because my classmates have strong accents. Also, our vocabulary is small, so it is hard to communicate with one another, but we try to make each other understood by using various means, such as using smart phones to look up vocabulary, visit websites for information, search for pictures and videos to help understand. (Interview with Hongjun, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

## Data from Class Observations and Field Notes

### Hongjun's Three Classes

The researcher observed Hongjun's three classes, including listening and speaking, reading and writing, and structure. Hongjun was an active speaker and initiated dialogue with other students, especially in his reading and writing class. The researcher will discuss the three classes in turn.

**Listening and speaking.** The listening and speaking class was fashioned as a debate, which was about traditional schooling vs. online learning. Hongjun's listening and speaking class took place in a small classroom like Lihua's. There were seven students in this class, including one Ukrainian female student, one Saudi Arabian female student, three Chinese male students, one Thai male student, and one Yemeni male student. The teacher was a middle aged American male.

Hongjun was teamed with the Ukrainian classmate and the Saudi Arabian classmate. He was the third debater. Their side was on traditional schooling. The online learning side included one Chinese male student, one Thai male and one Yemeni male. The last Chinese student was in charge of timing. The instructor flipped a coin and then declared that the online learning side started first. While they were stating their positions, Hongjun was taking notes. After all the three opponents finished stating their arguments, the teacher asked Hongjun's side to start. While his two team members were listing advantages of traditional schooling, Hongjun was also taking notes. It was Hongjun's turn to express his positions. He pointed out one advantage of traditional schooling: students could use facilities and equipment at school to advance learning, which was learning by doing. After the rebuttal, the teacher asked the students to have a group meeting. Hongjun turned to his two team members, and they talked about the questions they had for their

opponents. During their question-and-answer period, Hongjun asked one question; unfortunately, he was not able to express himself clearly, so he did not receive any answers. The teacher summarized the debate and gave them feedback immediately. After class, Hongjun told the researcher that he was nervous, so he did not think he did a good job on this debate, but he said that he learned a lot from his classmates.

**Reading and writing.** The reading and writing class discussed the book *The Joy Luck Club* by analyzing the relationship among the family members and studying vocabulary. There were 12 international students in Hongjun's reading and writing class, including three Chinese male students, one Chinese female student, seven Saudi Arabian male students, and one Saudi Arabian female student. The instructor was a young American male. He fully took advantage of the Internet and his body language to facilitate his teaching, which was different from what most ELI teachers do.

Hongjun sat in the middle of the classroom and his Chinese classmates were sitting around him, which accentuated him like the moon surrounded by many stars (众星捧月). His other non-Chinese international classmates sat scattered throughout the classroom. When the researcher asked him why he sat in the middle of the classroom, He explained:

It is easy to get my teacher's attention if I am sitting in the middle of the classroom. And then I have more opportunities to interact with him. I like his class, because he uses the Internet, websites, pictures, the projector, gestures, and actions to help us learn English. His class is interesting. I have never fallen asleep in his class. The most impressive part is his talent for mimicking sounds of animals and instruments. He could mimic the heart beat to show the meaning of the word *steady* and an infant's cry to tell us what is *squeaky*. I tried to use different ways to learn vocabulary like my teacher does. I think it is really helpful. (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

His instructor's use of material modes and symbolic signs triggered his interest in exploring and probing questions. For instance, when the instructor asked the class the name of one of the sisters in the book, one student said her name was 精梅 (Jingmei), but Hongjun did not agree with him.

To prove his classmate wrong, Hongjun visited Baidubaike (百度百科) on his phone to search for the sister's name. By referring to the book and Baidubaike, he found that this sister's name was 精妹 (Jingmei), not 精梅 (Jingmei) (the first character of the two compound words is the same, but the second one is different, although the pronunciation is similar). Even though these two names are pronounced in a similar fashion, the meanings are different. Hongjun used various tools to explore knowledge, which helped him build confidence in probing questions and solving problems.

Hongjun's full participation in class discussion and question-answer-dialogue made him the real center of the whole class. A case in point is that when the teacher led the class in discussing the reading comprehension questions (see Appendix B), Hongjun actively contributed to the discussions. He answered five questions out of six and all the answers were correct. Especially when the teacher and his classmates were hesitating to make a choice on question 4, which asked for the meaning of "immediate," Hongjun confidently told the class that the right answer should be c. The dialogue is shown below.

The question, "The immediate cause is a virus that is carried by tiny creatures called mites, which live on honeybee's bodies (paragraph 3). Answers are

- a. adj Happening without delay;
- b. adj Very close; nearby; or
- c. adj Just before or just after something in a sequence.

The instructor said that the answer should be a. Hongjun did not agree with him and explained,

According the context, the word *immediate* emphasizes the sequence, not time. So I think the right answer should be c. Also, I can get the hint from the last sentence, which says "[intensive] research has revealed that the causes of CCD are complex." There might be many causes, including direct and indirect ones. So "the immediate cause" should be understood as "just before or just after something in a sequence."

When the instructor asked if others had any opinions on this question, nobody offered input. The instructor checked the right answer on a piece of paper and said, “Hongjun, you are the winner. You won again.” The data illustrated Bakhtin’s (1984a) emphasis on the importance of dialogue in truth seeking. He averred that “truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction” (p. 110). The conversation mediated Hongjun’s L2 literacies practices and developed his thinking skills.

**Structure.** The structure class taught conditional clause and main clause, which focused on first, second, and third conditional. Hongjun’s structure class was small, which included five students: one Thai female, one Chinese female, one Thai male, and two Chinese male students. Hongjun sat in the first row of the classroom. His male Chinese classmate sat behind him. His instructor was a young American female. First, the instructor guided students in reviewing the last class by asking them questions. Hongjun answered two questions. And the teacher introduced the new content for this lesson. Hongjun took notes. When the instructor asked Hongjun to change a sentence into a conditional mode. Hongjun did not do it correctly first. By referring to his teacher’s hint, Hongjun corrected his mistake. The dialogue is shown below (T refers to the instructor; H refers to Hongjun):

H: It’s cold today. I am not wearing a coat. (The original sentences) It was cold today. I wish I wore a coat. (Changed the sentences)

T: Can you please read the first two sentences again?

H: It’s cold today. I am not wearing a coat.

T: Pay attention to the tenses of the two sentences.

H: Oh! It should be ‘It is cold today. I wish I were wearing a coat.’

T: Good!

When Hongjun was asked to read the sentences again, he realized that he made a mistake. He corrected himself immediately. The teacher did not point out his mistake. Instead, she requested that Hongjun read the first two sentences again. Hongjun noticed the second sentence was the present progressive tense, so he changed his answer from “I wish I wore a coat” to “I wish I were wearing a coat.” This dialogue between Hongjun and his instructor functioned as a mediational tool for Hongjun to understand the specific grammatical knowledge. The contextualized interaction provided Hongjun with a platform to improve L2 literacies.

The instructor asked the class to do exercises by filling out the blanks and then form groups of two or three to discuss the exercise, but Hongjun already finished all the blanks. Before Hongjun joined his group, he asked his instructor about the pronunciation of Elena, which was in one of the sentences in the exercise. His instructor showed him how to pronounce it. In the group activity, Hongjun took turns to ask his group member questions or answer their questions, such as “Do you have an airplane?” “No. I wish I could have one.” “Can you fly?” “No. I wish I could fly.” In the group work, Hongjun acted as a leader. After the group discussion, the instructor asked the class if they had any questions about the conditionals. The instructor asked Hongjun, “Do you have questions, Hongjun? You look confused. Are you okay?” Hongjun said he did not have any questions. The instructor directed the class to do one more exercise and then the class was dismissed. In this structure class, Hongjun acted as an active L2 learner.

In closing, Hongjun’s active interactions with his instructors and his classmates can be interpreted as an embodiment of his Chinese name and keepsake because he internalized what his Chinese name signified and what his keepsake symbolized.

## Data from the Second Interview

### A Debate

Hongjun claimed that his speaking and listening class improved his L2 competence in various skills dramatically, such as listening, speaking, thinking skills. He said that the debate was very interesting and helpful. He described,

That was my first time to debate in English. I was excited, but a little bit nervous. I wrote a script according to the topic and familiarized myself with the script. At the debate, I listened to my opponents very carefully to look for their weaknesses in order to attack them. I needed to react quickly. It was very helpful for speaking, listening, and the ability of quick reaction. (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Before the debate, Hongjun did a lot of research. He visited numerous websites and read articles about advantages of traditional schooling, which enriched his supportive points and further consolidated his argument. Also, the cooperation with his team members and competition with his opponents shaped him as an active and critical debater. Even though he served as a third debater in his group, he performed as a quick thinker when he attacked his opponents' flaws.

### Hongjun's Perception of the WeChat Discussion

Hongjun considered WeChat discussion beneficial because it helped improve writing. He stated that texting messages was like writing a short essay. He explained,

When I write my text message, I am very careful, because I do not want to make grammatical errors. I do not want to spell words wrongly either. And then I check if my argument is reasonable. I always ask myself: "does it make sense?" (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Not only did WeChat discussion improved his writing skills, but also his linguistic and thinking competence as illustrated by his following comments:

It is also helpful for listening. If a topic is about a video, I have to watch and listen to it first to understand what it talks about. It enriches my knowledge as well. The group discussion is kind of source of knowledge. It helps reading, because we need to read each other's text messages. (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

WeChat discussion also fashioned his identities: a leading discussant and a discussion participant. When he led a discussion, his focus was on selecting a topic. Hongjun reported,

As a discussion leader, I need to select a topic, which is very important. Usually, I follow three principles: 1. The topic should be meaningful. 2, The topic should guide our life. 3. The topic should be interesting; otherwise nobody would be interested in participating in the discussion. (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

As a text message follower, Hongjun did not need to worry about selecting topics or writing a summary. The main task was to respond to the leading discussant's or other participants' text messages. He noted,

When I am a discussion participant, I only need to follow others' text messages, no need to write a summary. But I have to read the leader's text message. Sometimes I also need to read an article on which a topic is based or watch a video to figure out what the topic is about. And then follow the leader's text or others.' (Interview with Hongjun, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

**Data from WeChat discussion exchanges.** Participants drew on the WeChat discussion platform to build a textual identity by verbally reacting and interacting with the other discussion group members. The WeChat discourse mediated their self-design in which they used English as a tool to create, maintain, and transform social reality (Lam, 2000). The section below will discuss how Hongjun interacted with his group members in the smartphone network-mediated community of practice.

***Identity as a leader.*** Hongjun led two discussions: one was about education, the other about testing. In his first leading discussion, he wrote, "Hello everyone. This is a topic about education for you." Beginning with a greeting, Hongjun acted as a speaker or presenter. In the following sentences, he used the second person pronoun "you" to address his group members. He invited his group members to join the discussion by asking "what's your opinion on education." At the end of this piece, he gave his members a hint "ex: the difference between [sic]Chinese one and [sic] American one."

Like Danny, Hongjun was inspired by a TED Talk: *Changing Education Paradigms*. He posted the video link before his text messaging, which functioned as an intertextual resource for his group members to know about the background and context of this discussion. Also, Hongjun asked his group members to make comparisons between Chinese education and American education. Unlike Danny and Lihua, Hongjun used two second person pronouns to distance himself from his group members, identifying himself as a discussion leader as he solicited their opinions. Hongjun received three responses from Danny. The main point Danny made was that both China and America met challenges in education. Seemingly, Hongjun agreed with Danny, but he used a hedge “well” to present a different opinion. Even though Danny’s argument was reasonable, Hongjun had his own thinking. He wrote, “but we can’t avoid it (challenge).” When Danny suggested that the Chinese government should support education, Hongjun used the Chinese Gaokao as an example to convince Danny that the government was taking actions to reform Chinese education. Hongjun acted as a knowledgeable authority.

In Hongjun’s second leading discussion, he wrote,

Tests, exams or quizzes have accompanied us for many years during primary school. We hate these annoying things; however, we have to do them. The question is, what is [sic] meaning and function of the tests, exams and quizzes to us or society? (Hongjun’s WeChat exchange, May 28<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Hongjun used two declarative statements and one interrogative sentence to introduce his topic. Apparently, Hongjun held a negative attitude toward examination, because he used an affective verb “hate” to express his emotion. Also, he used the adjective “annoying” to modify tests. Even though he did not like testing, he could not escape it. He used the deontic modality “have to” to signify that he did not have a choice. Also, he used the first plural pronouns “us” and “we” to point out the fact that testing has accompanied students since their elementary school. In the last sentence he uttered his inquiry and also the purpose of this topic: “What was the meaning of

testing for both individuals and society?” to solicit his members’ opinions.

After Hongjun sent this topic to WeChat, he received Lihua’s response quickly. Lihua expressed his positive attitude toward testing. Seemingly, Hongjun did not agree with Lihua, because he expressed his affective statement “I do not like test [sic],” but he admitted that “I believe we need these.” He used six sentences to explain the reasons for its necessity because “In our daily life, as you said, it is an assessment that show [sic] how we learn about the knowledge...with the tests, societies can develop and progress.” These reasons included figuring out disadvantages, guiding directions, screening talents, and advancing society.

Specifically, he used “I believe” to show his mental process and reasonable thinking, which formed a sharp contrast with his affective evaluation. The sentences “I do not like test [sic]” and “I believe we need these” presented a conflict between sense and sensibility. Even though he did not like taking tests, he still believed that it was necessary. In the following sentences, Hongjun used several modal verbs “can” to form a linguistic parallelism to accentuate the necessity for examination. Hongjun’s response to Lihua indicated his ambivalence about examination. However, Danny doubted the necessity to take tests. In his response to Hongjun’s discussion, he indicated taking tests was not necessary because “we need more experiences rather than examination [sic].”

*Identity as a discussant.* As a WeChat discussion participant, Hongjun actively responded to his group members’ text messages. In his response to Danny’s topic on virtual reality, he combined factual statements with epistemic modality (Fairclough, 2003) and deontic modality to present his argument. For example, Hongjun started with a factual statement that “Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows,” through which he made an evaluative statement by using the word “promising.” This word signaled a desirable effect. In the

following three sentences, he listed a set of possibilities that virtual reality would benefit humans:

We can use VR to do many things such as experiments, [sic] games. With the VR tech, we can have a better experience than before. It can save a lot of our money to build a real lab or be allowed into a lab as what the video says at the end. (Hongjun's WeChat exchange, May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

The prediction Hongjun made used modalized statements, in which the values were deeply embedded in the text. The three “cans” in the three sentences not only marked Hongjun's evaluative statements, but also echoed the word “promising” in the first sentence. In the fourth sentence, Hongjun used “however” to contrast the latter part of the writing to the former part, because virtual reality did have some negative influence on human life. In the last sentence, Hongjun made a conclusion that virtual reality was a controversial issue. If it was under control, it could be beneficial; otherwise, it could cause problems. Hongjun's response to Danny's topic displayed his logical and analytical thinking skills.

In the response to Lihua's topic on language: “Whether English will dominate the world? ...Is that good or bad?” Hongjun was the first one to voice his opinions. In his first sentence, Hongjun cited Darwin's evolutionary theory “survival of the fittest” to tell Lihua and other group members that the function of natural selection was suitable for language as well. He used the intertextual information to emphasize his argument. And then he used an if-clause to reveal the fact that if learning a language had more advantages, people would turn to it. That was why some languages disappeared while some other languages became popular. Unfortunately, Hongjun did not answer Lihua's last question: “Is that good or bad?”

Hongjun's interactive text messaging built his multiple identities as a knowledge authority, a critical thinker, and an advanced L2 learner. His English level was the highest among the three, which was verified by his interactions with his group members using the mode of text.

## Data from the Third Interview

### Strategies for Avoiding Embarrassment

The embarrassment Hongjun experienced seemed like a reminder for him to improve his speaking and listening skills. Hongjun explained that he was not familiar with the discourses of the restaurant and the grocery store, so he did not know how to react to people in those contexts. He said that the more exposure he had to the linguistic environment, the more experience he would gain. He also suggested that reflection on mistakes and setbacks was helpful to improve his English skills. Other strategies like asking questions, observing what native speakers do and say, and predicting and fast responding helped him learn. Initiating conversations with local people not only helped Hongjun enhance daily dialogue competence, but also expanded his knowledge. Attending BCM is a case in point.

Like Lihua, Hongjun improved his vocabulary by memorizing words, watching movies, and listening to songs. He stated, “If I do not understand it (a song), I check the lyrics. And then I sing with the singer in the song and think about what the song expresses.” In addition, personal interests helped him learn. Hongjun noted, “Once I find something interesting, but I do not know much about it, I take out my phone to google it immediately. I get so much knowledge by searching for information.” Like Lihua, Hongjun practiced listening and speaking by visiting websites that his instructors recommended. Constantly practicing English in multiple ways, Hongjun gained linguistic knowledge and competence. He said, “I have graduated from ELI and I am so excited. I am much more confident than before, because I can speak fluent English.” The embarrassment appeared to force Hongjun to learn. In the end of this interview, Hongjun added, “as long as you work hard enough, you will conquer yourself.”

**Smartphone and English learning.** Hongjun claimed that his smartphone was a very important tool to learn vocabulary and facilitate communication. He downloaded the Youdao dictionary like Danny and Lihua, so he could look up words anytime and anywhere. He described,

If I do not know a word, I just type this word on my phone and then I can know its' pronunciation and meaning immediately. In communication, if I do not understand a word, I will ask my interlocutor to enter that word into my phone and I can know it right away. For example, when I was at BCM, I always did not understand something. Sometimes even though they explained it to me, I still did not understand. I asked them to type the important words into my phone so that I could google them, especially names of places and people. And then I understood what they were talking about. (Interview with Hongjun, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

He also visited numerous websites to search for written information, oral texts, pictures, videos, and audio materials to improve his English by using search engines and useful online resources, such as Google and the Youdao dictionary. Hongjun reported that his smartphone not only helped him practice English, but also boosted his self-confidence. He perceived himself as a competent L2 learner and information consumer by constantly interacted with his smartphone and websites.

***Motivation of and inspiration for WeChat leading discussion.*** In the last interview, Hongjun told the researcher that he had high self-expectations. He said that he always wanted to be the best. That was why he was the one who sent the most text messages in the WeChat discussions. He was the most active discussion participant in interaction with others. He was always the first one to respond to his group members. His high motivation also arose from his perception of the WeChat discussion. He considered the WeChat discussion as a place to not only hone linguistic and thinking skills, but also exhibit one of his advantages: logical thinking. He also viewed the WeChat discussion as a stage to perform in front of his group members, a

place to share knowledge and expand ideas, and a community to evoke resonance. For example, when the researcher asked why Hongjun chose a topic on education. He explained,

I ruminated on this topic long time ago. I really have my own thinking about Chinese education. Also, I wanted to solicit a common thinking, because my group members and I were the products of Chinese education. We studied in China for many years before we came to America. We have many ideas on Chinese education. Also, we have many things to say about Chinese education. (Interview with Hongjun, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Like Lihua, Hongjun's WeChat discussion topic originated from his former learning experience and reflection on life. His topic prompted a small debate in this discussion group, in which there were seven exchanges. In another discussion that he led, he selected a topic on examination, which was also inspired by his embodied experience. Hongjun described,

I hate tests, but I am unable to escape it. In Chinese middle schools and high schools, tests are very frequent. After tests, our teachers would send our grades to our parents. If I did not do a good job, I would be frustrated. Even though testing is a tool to select talented people and promote development of society, I still hate it. (Interview with Hongjun, June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

These two topics selected from his lived experience verified Hongjun's critical thinking and reflection on life, which was meaningful and valuable. These topics also showed Hongjun's identity as a critical and logical thinker.

CHAPTER VIII:  
COMPARISONS OF THREE PARTICIPANTS

**Overview**

Drawing on the constant comparative method of qualitative analysis, the researcher categorized emerging themes, such as how Chinese names and keepsakes functioned as motivation and determination for these ELI students to actively participate in L2 literacies practices, their embarrassing experiences due to limited English proficiency, the smartphones that served as an indispensable tool to enlarge vocabulary, collect information, and facilitate communication and interaction, and students' engagement in WeChat discussions that helped them fashion multiple identities. Therefore, the researcher assumed that symbolic and material artifacts (e.g. Chinese names and keepsakes) can be a source of motivation and that the participants' embarrassing experiences in different discourses mainly resulted from their low level of speaking and listening competence. To avoid embarrassment, to become successful community members, and to communicate effectively, these students developed numerous strategies, including investment in local social networks, taking full advantage of multiple tools and modes, and engaging in dialogical class activities.

**Chinese Names and Keepsakes as a Source of Motivation**

**Chinese Names**

Chinese names are not randomly given, but carefully chosen according to sound, form, and meaning (Blum, 1997; Watson, 1986). Among the three elements of naming, meaning is overwhelmingly important, because “[i]n Chinese society names classify and individuate, they

have transformative powers, and they are an important form of self-expression” (Watson, 1986, p. 618). A Chinese name symbolizes parents’ expectations for the child. It is also expected to bring the child good luck (Blum, 1996; Watson, 1986), as Chinese parents believe that Chinese personal names “have an efficacy in their own right” (Watson, 1986, p. 622). Since the wishes from a family are embodied by their names, Chinese parents assign meanings to their children’s names so they represent their personalities, characters, capabilities, and future accomplishments.

The data in this research showed that these Chinese ELI students’ Chinese names, as symbolic artifacts, carried rich meanings, which not only symbolized their familial expectations, but also expressed their familial duties. Their Chinese names indicated that they were supposed to be ambitious, aggressive, useful, and valuable people. They internalized their familial expectations into their imagined identities. They shouldered their family obligations to America to fulfill their potentials. Even though all of them faced many difficulties when they first arrived this country, they endeavored to overcome them because they believed that they would have bright futures like their names indicated, which conformed to Norton’s (2000) argument on imagined identity and imagined community. She contended that when language learners project their identities into their imagined communities, they have a strong investment in language learning and identity development. These participants’ frequent interactions with their Chinese names established and re-established meanings from and for their names, which exemplified their strengths, motivations, attitudes, and agency to change their past selves, develop current selves, and design their future selves. Interestingly, each of these three participants chose a different means of naming himself to create and establish new identities as L2 learners. Hongjun simply used the name his parents gave him, while Lihua chose a new Chinese name to make a

statement about himself as an English learner, and Danny chose a name that would not create an impediment for non-Chinese speakers.

### **Keepsakes**

According to Pahl and Rowsell (2010), every artifact has the linguistic potential for people to tell a story; it “embodies people, stories, thoughts, communities, identities, and experiences” (p. 2). Artifacts provide people with power to overcome adversities and difficulties. All the three participants had keepsakes, including a picture of plum blossoms, a nail file, and a parents’ photo, which were strongly tied to their families and home country. The relations of the keepsakes with their families served as inspiration and motivation for their L2 literacies practices. Danny’s picture of the plum blossom encouraged him to deal with difficulties. Even though Lihua’s nail file was a common tool, he viewed it as significant, because it was made by his father and embodied Lihua’s importance to him as his son. It became a symbol of his Chinese inheritance and expectations of his family. It thus supported and gave life and motivation to his desire to change his stigmatized identity as a Gaokao failure. Hongjun’s parents’ photo reminded him of his parents’ expectations for him. All the keepsakes, as material artifacts, functioned as empowerment, encouragement, and enlightenment for these three Chinese ELI students to chase their dreams.

All the participants interacted with their keepsakes to interpret the meanings that the keepsakes had for them (Blumer, 1969). They understood and internalized what the keepsakes meant to them so that they had the ability to use the meanings to guide their L2 learning and socialization.

To sum up, these three Chinese ELI students’ Chinese names and keepsakes that carried rich and special meanings served as a source of motivation, determination, and resolution to

empower them to deal with linguistic and cultural barriers, improve symbolic competence, develop viable current identities, and visualize their ideal future selves.

### **Limited English Proficiency Resulted in Embarrassment**

Language is an affordance that facilitates and constrains one's identity negotiation and development. If L2 learners do not have a good command of English, they might lose an important means to claim their identities. Davies and Harre (2007) contended that people are positioned through discursive practices in which individuals' identity is generated by using and learning a language. These three participants were positioned by the native speakers as illegitimate L2 users due to their limited English proficiency.

Danny was the head of the Liaison Department of the Student Union and successfully passed the Gaokao in China, but he was a poor English user. He was unable to order a meal in English in America, which was considered a sign of his failure to meet his parents' expectations and his own ambition. In other words, his stable identities constructed through his home language and culture were challenged automatically, which could have been one of the reasons for his sense of disconnection. Lihua attributed his embarrassment at the airport to his "dumb and deaf" English. Similarly, Hongjun's difficulty in understanding the waiter also resulted from his inadequate English competence. The encounters these three Chinese ELI students experienced in various contexts showed the intertwined relationship between language and identity; that is, "identity constructs and is constructed by language" (Norton, 1997, p. 419). These students' inability to verbally interact with those native speakers in different situations caused failures to negotiate meanings and build a sense of themselves.

### **Strategies for Accumulating Linguistic Capital and Identity Development**

These three participants developed multiple strategies for accumulating material and symbolic capital, including investing in social networks, immersing themselves in linguistic surroundings, using smartphones to improve vocabulary and facilitate conversations, and actively participating in the WeChat group discussions.

#### **Investment in Social Networks to Gain a Sense of Affiliation**

The three Chinese ELI students were aware of how to gain access to local material and symbolic resources, including making friends with Americans, attending culturally speaking and BCM activities. All of them considered interaction with Americans an effective way to practice L2 literacies. Also, friendship as a symbolic resource seemed to be helpful for not only establishing a sense of self, but also building a sense of affiliation. Their moves to invest in social networks and linguistic capital confirmed Norton's (2000) theory of investment. She warned that language learning is not just an individual accomplishment, but it relates to power relations between the language learner and the native speaker. All the moves these three ELI students made showed their high motivations and strong desires to learn English by building local social networks. The social networks, as invisible and intangible resources, had potential to provide these participants with unlimited opportunities to practice L2 literacies and secure legitimized memberships.

#### **Using Multiple Modes and Tools to Improve L2 Learning and Construct Identities**

All the participants considered their smartphones as a necessary tool for their L2 literacies practices. The basic function of their smartphones was helping enlarge vocabulary. All of them believed that their vocabulary was limited, which could have been one of the reasons for

their difficulty in communication, so they took full advantage of smartphones to look up words in formal and informal L2 learning settings.

The most important function of their smartphones was a tool for communication and gaining information and knowledge. They used smartphones to facilitate dialogue when they talked with both native and non-native speakers, such as searching for words, pictures, maps, audios, and videos. They visited various websites by using their smartphones or computers to collect, process, and analyze information to make PowerPoint presentations that comprised a representational and communicational ensemble (Kress, 2000, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Stein, 2008; van Leeuwen, 2005) to design meanings for their class presentations. In addition, they actively participated in the mobile, network-mediated WeChat group discussions. They led or followed discussions in the community of L2 practice by combining their prior knowledge and information attained online not only to produce and reproduce texts to communicate and represent, but also to develop multilayered identities. For example, all three participants were concerned about engaging their group members in the We Chat discussion, because they considered the high level of participation as acceptance of and recognition for their performance when they led discussions. The responsibilities these three participants assumed as discussion leaders encouraged them to use multiple tools and modes to design novel, interesting, and valuable topics. Also, high self-expectations motivated them to deliberately prepare for leading discussions, which not only improved their writing, listening, reading, and thinking skills, but also boosted their self-confidence.

Furthermore, the data also demonstrated that these three participants fashioned their identities through the WeChat discussion based on the interactional text messages with each other, because each one functioned as an affordance for others to construct ideal and viable

identities. This finding confirmed Bakhtin’s (1984) argument on relationship of dialogicality with identity construction, about which he states that “[to] be means to be another, and through the other, for oneself. A person has no internal himself, he looks into the eyes of another with eyes of another” (p. 287). The data also supported Clark and Holquist’s (1984) observation on the intertwined relationship between texts and identifications. They stated that “[w]hat the self is answerable to is the social environment; what the self is answerable for is the authorship of its response” (p. 9). In this smartphone, network-mediated discussion group, all these three Chinese ELI students were active participants.

The text messages of the WeChat discussion showed the participants’ styles of arguments and identities, which mirrored Fairclough’s (2003) perspective on texts and identification. He observed that “[who] you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write” (p. 159), which indexes that oral and written texts speak to identities. All the participants designed their smartphone, network-mediated textual selves by texting their thoughts and arguments, which were dynamic, multilayered, and sometimes contradictory. Figure 9 shows their textual identities.

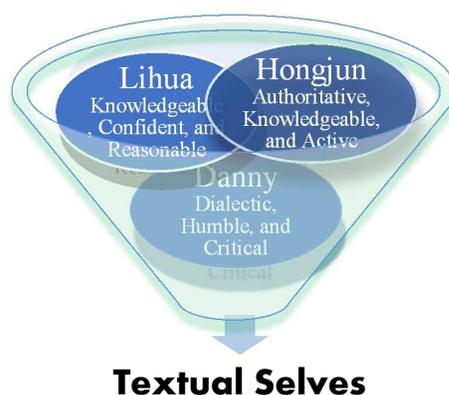


Figure 9. Chinese ELI students’ WeChat textual selves

In short, the constant interactions with multiple modes and tools made them responsible, capable, and confident L2 learners and users.

### **Engagement in Dialogical Class Activities**

According to van Lier (2004), the classroom, as an ecological context is “full of meaning potential, especially if it has a rich semiotic budget” (p, 96), in which L2 learners as agentic social beings make reasonable decisions to improve themselves and develop viable identities. Material and symbolic signs and artifacts (e.g. a smart phone, a picture, or an utterance) in a classroom bring about meanings to fuel perception and activity. Also, meaningful dialogues between students and their teacher help L2 learners improve linguistic competence and self-formation, because “dialogue creates the possibility of language; language emerges from dialogue and is its consequence. Language, in turn, is the essential medium of dialogue and self-formation” (Marchenkova, 2005, p. 175).

All three students’ participation in dialogues with their instructors not only improved their L2 competence, but also developed their multiple identities. For example, these three participants all sat in the front or middle of the classrooms, and all of them were active in class activities and interactions, except for Danny in his reading and writing class because he could not follow his teacher quite well. Answering questions not only showed their activity in class interactions, but also demonstrated their L2 learning skills and trajectories. Participation expanded vocabulary, improved oral capacity, and advanced thinking ability. Using multiple tools and modes to interact with instructors and classmates was the other means to shape them as L2 learners. These three participants’ interactions with their instructors evidenced Bakhtin’s (1981) perspective on dialogue: “one becomes a subject only by participating in dialogue.” (p. 159).

These ELI students' engagements in classes could be attributed to their desire to exercise control over their agency to improve their L2 literacies. First of all, they shouldered familial responsibilities. All of them were the only child in their respective families. In addition, the ELI context, including their instructors and their international classmates formed an inclusive, sharing, and friendly L2 learning environment, which offered a safe place for these three ELI students to participate in communities of practice. They acted both as expert L2 learners and novices, which scaffolded and were scaffolded to co-construct knowledge and fashion identities.

These three Chinese ELI students actively engaged in formal learning and informal learning by using multiple modes and tools to facilitate their L2 literacies practices and fashion multilayered identities.

Chapters IV to VIII presented the findings from all the data sources including interviews, class observations and field notes, and WeChat exchanges. Chapter IX will answer the research questions based on the findings in order to conclude how these Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to participate in communities of L2 practices and develop identities. It will also discuss pedagogical implications and a future research agenda.

CHAPTER IX:  
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**Overview**

The interviews, class observations and field notes, coupled with WeChat exchanges in this study have displayed a whole picture of three Chinese ELI students' L2 learning experiences, which evidence the complicated relations and interactions among multimodality, sociocultural theory, L2 literacies practices, and identity negotiation. This intensive case study presented three Chinese ELI students' L2 literacies practices in different communities, such as the local cultural community (the dormitory community, the neighborhood community, and the BCM organization), the international community (the mixed group), and the WeChat discussion group. These communities functioned as affordances to facilitate their L2 acquisition and socialization and develop dynamic identities.

This case study emphasized the importance of language as the predominant semiotic mediation in L2 literacies practice, power relations transformation or preservation, agency exertion, and identity negotiation. Other modes and tools, including smartphones, audio and video materials, music, gestures, and typography as the mediational means, also contributed to L2 literacies practices and identity-making. In addition, this research indicated that participation in the mixed group and the WeChat discussion group activities improved the students' communicative and symbolic competence, which promoted their self-understanding and identity-construction. In the section below, the researcher will discuss the findings related to the research questions posed in Chapter I and supported by the theoretical framework and the literature

review in Chapter II. Furthermore, based on the analysis of the data from Chapters IV-VIII, Chapter IX foregrounds implications for pedagogy in ELI and ESL teaching and learning. In the end, this chapter envisions future research and summarizes this study.

### **Discussion of Research Question 1**

*How do Chinese ELI students interact with multiple modes and tools to participate in L2 literacies practices and negotiate their identities?* The researcher revisited findings merged from all the data, including the interviews, class observations and field notes, and WeChat exchanges to verify the understandings of Chinese ELI students' English learning trajectories and experiences. Viewing through the lens of the theoretical framework informed by the four quadrants of sociocultural theory, multimodality, identity, and L2 literacies, the researcher presents the answer to Research Question 1 below.

### **Findings for Research Question 1**

All the participants used multiple modes (e.g., pictures, videos, audios, and gestures) and tools (e.g., smartphones, computers, and laptops) to expand their vocabulary, negotiate meanings, facilitate conversations, and produce and reproduce oral and written texts to develop complicated, dynamic, and multilayered identities when they participated in various communities of L2 practices.

The participants interacted with smartphones to collect L2 learning resources and available designs (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Kern, 2000), such as music, pictures, videos, audios, and movies in different situations, including formal learning communities and informal learning communities. The participants' smartphones combined with other digital tools and multiple modes served as fundamental linguistic and cultural ecologies for them to socialize through L2 to become recognizable and acceptable group members. In other words, these participants, as

meaning makers and designers, used (available) designs to reconstruct available resources to transform meanings, learning situations, and themselves (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012) in the smartphone, network-mediated communities.

In the following section, the researcher will highlight how these Chinese ELI students interacted with multiple modes and tools to communicate and represent themselves by engaging in different discourses to develop their hybrid identities.

**Smartphones and modes of listening and speaking.** The participants' use of smartphones made it possible for L2 literacies practices anytime and anywhere. They used their smartphones to look for words, pictures, audios, videos, and maps to mitigate any difficulties in understanding during conversations with native speakers and non-native speakers. Specifically, they used their smartphones to clarify misunderstandings, improve pronunciation, and enhance speech comprehension in different discourses, such as Danny's instructions for teaching ping-pong to his American friend, Hongjun's dialogues with American students in BCM, and Lihua's listening and speaking activities in *Culturally Speaking*. The findings suggested that their smartphones were not just an auxiliary tool for learning English, but an integral aspect of L2 literacies practices. The use of smartphones helped form their identities as smart, capable, and confident L2 users.

**Smartphones and modes of reading and writing.** The students used the WeChat discussion tool, as a written utterance, to make meaning of a socially situated identity and a socially situated practice (Gee, 2011); the smartphone-mediated discussions were a multi-semiotic resource that realized meaning and expressed identities for the students (Kenner, 2004). The participants demonstrated that the WeChat discussions honed their interactional and communicative competence, including dialogical, dialectic, and rhetorical skills by interacting

with each other in the smartphone, network-mediated community. They practiced L2 reading and writing by designing written texts generated from audio and video materials online and their lived experiences. The interactional text messages were the product of communicational and representational ensemble, which embodied the participants' "creation and organization of the presentation" (Albers & Harste, 2007, p. 14). Text messages exteriorized and materialized these meaning designers' personal preferences, cultural and social considerations, understandings of all modes used in design, and their agency and identities. The smartphone, network-mediated group discussions helped the participants build a sense of authorship and subjectivity.

**Digital tools and PowerPoint presentations.** The participants collected digital resources to make Power Point slides to present their projects in their formal L2 learning communities. For example, Lihua combined pictures with written words and speech to explain the abstract word "adiposis" in his presentation. Lihua claimed that the use of Power Point slides not only facilitated his presentation and triggered his classmates' learning interest, but also boosted his self-confidence. In addition, Hongjun's designing of the Power Point presentation constructed him as a competent designer. After Hongjun googled relevant information about hurricanes (his topic) on his smartphone, he made Power Point slides for his presentation. He stated,

My PPT combined written words and pictures. Pictures vividly and directly expressed how a hurricane was formed and occurred. Sometimes a picture can convey the meanings that written words cannot. Before this presentation, I had no idea about hurricanes. I learned how hurricanes were formed and where they occurred by making Power Point slides. PPT gave me hints while I was presenting. It piqued my classmates' interest in this topic. I think PPT helped me communicate. (Interview with Hongjun, June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016)

Danny's designing of his 3D ship model fully demonstrated his ability to use digital tools and multiple modes to communicate his ideas. This use of language and multiple modes and tools-mediated activity concretized Danny's identity as a talented designer, an active L2 user, and a knowledge explorer.

**Smartphones and opportunities for L2 literacies.** The mixed group discourse functioned as a mediation for not only L2 literacies practices, but also multicultural awareness and identity building. The three ELI students acquired symbolic competence (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007) by using smartphones to visit different websites to reframe the ecology of L2 literacies in the mixed group interactions. When the Chinese ELI students were involved in conversations of culture exchange, they took full advantage of their smartphones to collect and transmit relevant information about Chinese culture, history, value, and ideology to maximize opportunities for L2 literacies practices. The use of smartphones and other modes, such as audios, videos, and pictures smoothed their conversations in mixed groups, and through these modes, the participants changed and reframed the context so that they had unlimited material and symbolic resources to practice L2 literacies. The ELI students maximized affordances of multiple modes and tools to engage in L2 literacies practices and build hybrid identities.

The participants used smartphones and other digital tools to gain access to group memberships, improve cultural responsibilities, initiate conversations, and establish an ownership of English. In conclusion, the local community, mixed groups, and the WeChat discussion community functioned as cultural and linguistic ecologies where the Chinese ELI students constructed their multiple identities through participating in L2 literacies practices by interacting with multiple modes and tools. Their L2 learning trajectories showed an intertwined relationship between agency, multimodality, and identity. Their agency prompted them to use multiple modes and tools to develop identities, which in turn encouraged them to use multimodality and improved their agency. The findings indicated that the Chinese ELI students exerted agency to capitalize on multimodality to engage in L2 literacies practices to fashion their current selves and design their future identities. The viable and desirable identities improved

their self-efficacy and further enhanced their participation and engagement in L2 literacies practices. Figure 10 shows the relationship among multimodality, participation, identity, and agency.

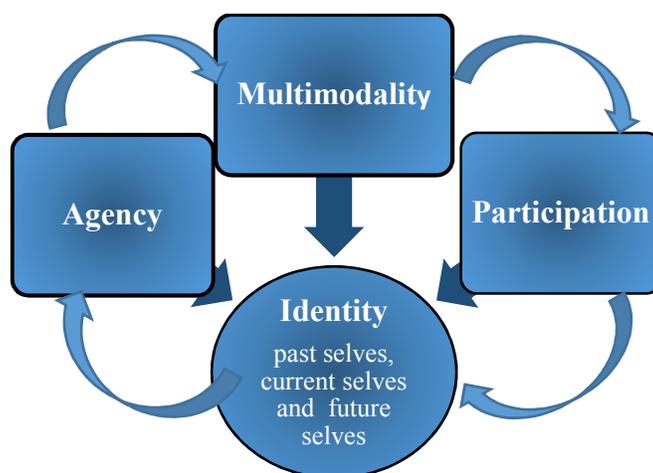


Figure 10. The ecology of L2 literacies practices

### Discussion of Research Question 2

*To what extent might multimodality influence Chinese ELI students' identity construction and reconstruction?*

### Findings for Research Question 2

The findings from the data showed that the use of multimodal resources functioned as affordances and mechanisms for these Chinese ELI students to improve language learning in ways that were transformative and affected their identity negotiation and construction, which echoed van Lier's (2004) perspective on modes and academic discourse. The participants used smart phones as their main tools to participate in communities of L2 practices. Other visual and audio modes, like music, audio recordings, and movies were used to engage in L2 acquisition and socialization as well. They claimed that the use of multiple modes and tools made them capable L2 users. These modes and tools functioned as mechanisms for them to become identified and identifiable members in communities of L2 literacies practice.

**Smartphones, participation, and identity.** According to Wenger (1998), participation is a process of identity negotiation and development. He held that “participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (p. 4). Based on Wenger’s theory and the findings from Chapter IV-VIII, the researcher posited that the Chinese ELI students’ interaction with their smartphones created and increased possibilities for community engagement and participation to realize their identity formation and development.

*Interaction with smartphones to facilitate participation.* The findings illustrated that the Chinese ELI students’ constant interactions with their smartphones to search for information relevant to their classes provided opportunities for participation and engagement. For example, in Hongjun’s reading and writing class, he created interactive and dialogical opportunities to explore knowledge and seek truth by using his smartphone to collect relevant and available resources to analyze and synthesize information. The interactions with his smartphone placed him at the center of the class, which not only enhanced Hongjun’s multiple abilities, but also developed his multiple identities. Lihua visited Baidubake on his phone to collect learning resources about Chinese traditional music and instruments to initiate conversations with his group members in the listening and speaking class. Danny used his phone to do research on vaccination to help lead his group members in the discussion in his speaking and listening class. Their interactions with their smartphones increased possibilities for class involvement and engagement, because “I use my phone a lot to check words and search for pictures and videos, which helped me understand my instructors and classmates” (Lihua) and “I always use my phone to look up words, because we can use phones in class. It is very helpful” (Hongjun). Danny added, “my smartphone is crucial for my English learning, especially for looking up words. It is indispensable, so to speak.” The frequent use of smartphones in formal learning settings not only

expanded their vocabulary, but also enriched their linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as constructed identified and identifiable identities. All the three participants actively interacted with their smartphones to obtain available designs and resources to reconstruct and transform visual and audio texts to maximize their class participation, which helped them fashion identities as capable L2 meaning designers and knowledge co-constructors.

In addition, the participants' interactions with each other in the smartphone-mediated discussion community optimized their L2 learning effectiveness and efficiency. The interaction in a mode of text involved in listening, reading, and writing, which provided these participants with a platform to improve their critical thinking skills and rhetorical competence.

*Interaction with smartphones to develop identities.* After the students experienced embarrassment in various situations, they developed numerous strategies to reach their short-term goals. They claimed that using smartphones was the fundamental strategy to expand vocabulary and visit websites to collect information available to facilitate communication in and out of class. Their frequent interactions with smartphones and websites significantly increased their opportunities to participate in communities of practice. The active interaction with smartphones for learning and participation provided them with opportunities for community memberships. All the participants were involved in different learning communities, such as the mixed group and the WeChat discussion group. They formed temporal, ongoing, and complex identities, because they viewed texting, project presenting, and cultural exchanging as ways to construct their identities. Since identity formation includes negotiated experiences, community memberships, and L2 learning trajectories (Wenger, 1998), interactions with smartphones significantly influenced these participants' identity development in multiple ways, such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

## Findings Different from Literature and Explanations

Research has shown that Chinese international students remain silent in class (Duff, 2002; Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft, 2003; McKay & Wong, 1996; Miller, 2000, 2003a, 2003b; Liu, 2002, 2003; Stevens, 2012). For example, in Duff's (2002) research, she found that "[non]-local students said they were afraid of being criticized or laughed at in class because of their English. Silence protected them from humiliation." (Duff, 2002, p. 312). Another example is from Hu and Fell-Eisenkraft's (2003) study. They observed that Chinese immigrant students were quiet and hesitant to participate in oral activities in class interactions. In addition, Stevens (2012) contended that

[what] remains unchanged, however, is a distinct lack of participation in classroom and extracurricular activities. The causes of this lack of engagement may be rooted in deep cultural and political differences between Chinese and U. S. students and faculty. (p. 3)

Also, an instructor from an unpublished study by this researcher claimed that Chinese ELI students always sat in the back row of the classroom and were taciturn. She described,

I know you sent me a silent message: "do not call me. I do not know what I am doing. I am not prepared and not confident. I am in the safety zone, so do not bother me." They just create a distance from them and me. (Interview with an instructor at the ELI, January 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016).

Interestingly, the three participants were totally different from what the literature shows and the researcher's previous study indicated. All of them engaged in class interactions. Their active class participation might be accounted for by the following reasons. All three students experienced embarrassment due to their limited English proficiency, which became a driving force and source of determination and resolution to change their learning situations and learning outcomes. More importantly, because of their strong desire to change their identities as illegitimated L2 learners, they developed various strategies to reach their visible and valued goals, such as using smartphones to expand vocabulary and visit websites to collect information

available to facilitate communication in and out of class, which made it possible for them to participate in class activities. Even though previous research on Chinese ESL students' L2 acquisition and development mentioned technology in L2 learning, such as instant messaging, creating websites, and online writing (Lam, 2009a, 2009b, 2013; Nelson, 2006), no studies paid attention to integrating smartphones into ELI learning and teaching. This could be the main reason why the participants were able to actively participate in class.

Their sense of agency might have made a difference in their L2 learning. All three participants set a specific short-term goal: attaining a good command of English in order to start their program studies, which squares well with Bandura's (2006) argument on agency. He contended that "people set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts" (p. 164). To reach this goal, the students developed strategies to socialize through L2. For example, all of them created access to local communities of practices to maximize their L2 learning opportunities, such as attending Culturally Speaking, engaging in BCM activities, and making friends with American students, which facilitated their social networking and linguistic capital. The expectations of the ELI students' families might have also strengthened their agency. Their Chinese names, given by their parents, carried rich and deep meanings. The keepsakes they brought to remind them of their families contributed to their agency. Danny's picture of plum blossoms, which symbolized doggedness and perseverance. Lihua's nail file represented his father's love and hope for him. Hongjun's parents' photo connected him with his family, which also stood for their parents' hope for him. Their Chinese names and keepsakes helped them become self-regulators to improve their learning environment and overcome difficulties, which confirmed Bandura's (2006) suggestion that "[a]gency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans, but

also the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution” (p. 165).

The students viewed the classroom as the main community of L2 practices. They actively interacted with their international classmates and American instructors to improve their L2 skills. All of them were not afraid of making mistakes, because they learned from the mistakes. In Lihua’s structure class, he was corrected four times by his instructor; but he was not discouraged, because he believed that he learned from his mistakes. In Hongjun’s reading and writing class, he placed himself at the center of the class. In Danny’s speaking and listening class, he led a group discussion for about 20 minutes, and he was the first one to voluntarily answer his instructor’s questions twice. They set the goals, adhere to them, and made every effort to reach them. The students appeared to have a high sense of efficacy, which helped them visualize and achieve valued success that provided them with positive guidance for performance (Bandura, 1989).

In addition, the ELI learning community, as a fundamental sociocultural context, provided the ELI students with a friendly, inclusive, and sharing environment, which was different from the research settings in the studies of Liu (2001, 2002), Miller (2000, 2003a, 2003b), McKay and Wong (1996), Hu & Fell-Eisenkraft (2003), and Duff (2002). These examples of previous research have been completed in mainstream classrooms, where American students were the majority, and who constituted the sociocultural and linguistic milieu. However, the three Chinese ELI students in this study were situated in an international cultural and linguistic context in which all students were L2 learners. There were no discriminations or privileges awarded. Also, their instructors helped create an atmosphere of appreciation and

inclusiveness, which built a safe zone for the ELI students to immerse themselves in the L2 learning community.

Furthermore, gender might have made a difference. All the participants were male Chinese students, who might have been more active than female Chinese immigrant students. This finding could be explained by Chinese traditional culture where women should be reserved and quiet. However, this explanation can be stereotypical, because modern Chinese females might be different from what the traditional norms valued. But, what could be the most reasonable explanation for this finding? More research needs to be completed to answer this question. Also, the ELI students were young, which might have resulted in the difference as well.

Summing up, the Chinese students' symbolic and material artifacts functioned as empowerment and inspiration for them to look for solutions to fulfill their familial and personal goals. The embarrassment they experienced in different contexts became a driving force for them to develop all kinds of strategies to avoid embarrassing encounters. The use of smartphones in local communities, formal learning communities, and the WeChat discussion community mediated L2 learning and identity negotiation, which optimized their chance to socialize through L2 and develop multiple and dynamic identities. Figure 11 shows the communities of smartphone network-mediated L2 literacies practices.

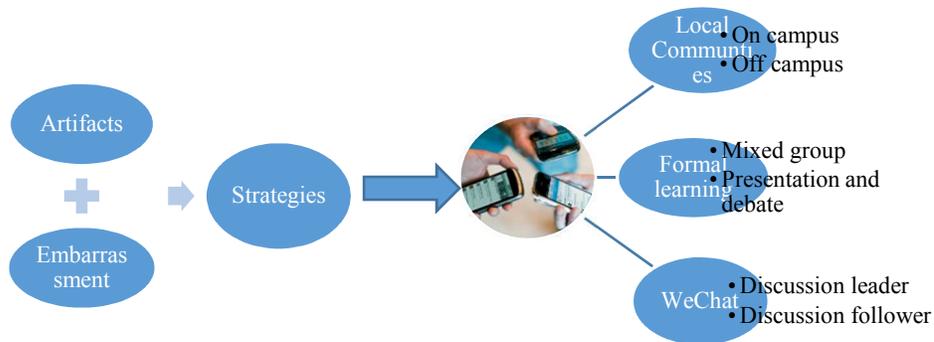


Figure 11. Communities of smartphone, network-mediated L2 learning

## **Pedagogical Implications**

Findings from this intensive case study provide pedagogical implications for ELI and ESL education both on conceptual and practical levels. On the conceptual level, this research contributes to understanding the ways in which ELI students participated in cultural and linguistic engagement and enrichment. On the practical level, this study offers implications for ELI and ESL teachers and instructors to facilitate teaching and learning. The researcher will discuss these implications in the following section.

### **Encouraging Students to Move to Mixed Groups from “Chinatown”**

Sticking in “Chinatown” (Chinese students stick together in class) limits opportunities of Chinese ELI students to be exposed to American and other cultures. It also constrains their chance to speak English. “Chinatown” is like an isolated island, where students do not have access to multicultural and multi-linguistic resources. Even though they are in the U.S., they have very limited chances to practice English. Also, intensive instruction in grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary have limited value when L2 learners have little opportunity to participate in wider communities, which confirms Norton’s (2001) observation that “[e]ven when opportunities did arise [...] they found that there were particular social conditions under which they were most uncomfortable and unlikely to speak” (p.169). According to Stevens (2012), Chinese ELI students tended to avoid interactions both with American students and other internationals, which significantly limited their language socialization and interaction. Their non-participation in communities of English learning tightened the same social and ethnic bonding. The longer they confine themselves in “Chinatown”; the more likely they will face social exclusion. As a result, they are perceived as intellectually inferior and socially inconsequential, so ELI and ESL teachers and instructors

can-and-must provide opportunities to create constructive, cohesive learning communities in which differences are accommodated and bridged, and where students and teachers negotiate their identities and subject-matter knowledge together in culturally respectful and equitable ways through social interaction. (Duff, 2002, p. 290)

These Chinese ELI students' willingness to join in mixed groups helped them become active participants, socializing through English to legitimize them as acceptable community members. Once they graduate from the ELI and attend their program studies, they will likely be able to interact successfully with their American peers in communities of L2 literacies practice in their chosen academic disciplines. It is important to encourage Chinese students to break out of "Chinatown" and join different ethnic groups to participate in group activities.

### **Building an Ecological and Dialogical Class**

ELI students come with various linguistic abilities, multiple cultural identities, and different perspectives. Given the heterogeneity in their backgrounds, it is natural that they exhibit varied learning preferences: Some are visually oriented; others favor hands-on activities; still others learn by drawing, performing, and writing. In this sense, a full use of modes and signs is crucial to successful ELI teaching and learning. According to van Lier (2004), a classroom is a place where both the teacher and students are able to use rich semiotic resources to make and negotiate meaning. For example, in Hongjun's reading and writing class, the instructor used various material and symbolic resources to contextualize vocabulary learning. A switch on the wall can be a tool to teach students what the noun "switch" means. An action of switching a switch can be a mode to teach students what the verb "switch" refers to.

Also, searching online for information advantages ELI teaching and learning. Hongjun's teacher Googled pictures of pollen to show the class what the meaning of this word was. After looking at the pictures, Hongjun said, "wow, this is pollen. I saw it every day on the way to ELI." Even though he saw it every day, he might not know what it was; he might not know how

to say it in English. The pictures simplified and visualized the abstract concept in a way that students could understand and internalize easily. In addition, the pictures functioned as a generator of dialogue, which invited ELI students to have meaningful and purposeful conversations with each other and their instructors to negotiate meanings. Hongjun's instructor took advantage of the Internet to search for information, like written texts, oral texts, pictures, audios, videos, and movies to create a dialogical class to meet the needs of different ELI students.

### **Being Sensitive to ELI Students' Nonverbal Communications**

Given the ELI students' limited English proficiency, it might be difficult for them to follow their instructors all the time. It took time for them to translate English into Chinese and then translate Chinese into English, so instructors need to give them time to process the two-way translations. Also, ELI students' concerns about grammatical errors might mean that they take more time to process utterances, so ELI instructors need to be patient with their students. Being patience with students means that instructors need to seek for thoughtful responses instead of the fastest answers by giving students enough time to think and organize correct and concise language. This pedagogical patience means not simply giving more time to students, but it also means that instructors need to create a safe place for students to process information and knowledge. Teachers may implicitly scaffold them when necessary, by allowing them to make mistakes, by knowing their strengths and shortcomings, by respecting them, and by letting their voices be heard.

In addition, a sensitivity to ELI students' nonverbal communications is key to building a safe, friendly, and inclusive zone for ELI students to practice L2 literacies. For example, in Hongjun's structure class, the teacher asked him, "You looked confused. Do you have any

questions?” When the Chinese ELI students were not ready to verbally communicate with their instructors, they always used body language to interact with them, such as nodding or shaking heads, shrugging their shoulders, or putting their hands on their heads. Sometimes they used facial expressions to show their confusion and bewilderment. It is necessary to be aware of their students’ gestures, body movements, and facial expressions to know their learning needs and interests.

### **Valuing and Employing Agency to Promote Participation**

Interestingly, this research illustrated that when the Chinese ELI students participated in mixed group activities and the WeChat discussions, they were more concerned about their performance if they acted as group leaders. For instance, Lihua viewed himself as an example for his group members when he was leading a group discussion. He stated,

I do not know how they (his group members) see me, but I do not want to be a bad group leader. I have to make sure that my pronunciation is correct, my grammar is right, and I speak it clearly. I mean I need to make myself understood easily. So I practiced a lot before the discussion. (Interview with Lihua, May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016)

Also, the preparation to lead a group discussion was challenging and time consuming, but beneficial. Lihua stated that he had a strong sense of responsibility to guide and encourage his group members to talk. Hongjun expressed the same feeling when he led a discussion on WeChat. He claimed that the discussion topic should interest him and his group members as well. It should also be meaningful. More importantly, he had to be very careful about his writing, because he did not want to be mocked. These concerns forced him to work hard to act as a real leader in a smartphone, network-mediated group discussion.

Leading a group discussion both in mixed groups and the WeChat group not only helped these ELI students build a sense of affiliation, but also provided them with a platform to perform their social roles. The role of the discussion leader was supposed to be different from that of the

other group members: Being more capable, more diligent, or more intelligent. The perceived role represented expectations from the instructors, the other group members, and the leader himself, which increased the leader's self-esteem and self-efficacy. Therefore, the perceived role had potential for them to better exercise their agency to participate in L2 literacies. In this sense, it is crucial to value and tap into students' agency to help them become competent L2 learners and users.

### **Negotiating Culture and Language in Classroom Spaces**

Chinese names not only can be seen as a motivation to improve L2 literacies practices, but also can be used as teaching and learning resources. Chinese names, as symbolic artifacts, carry rich, interesting, and special meanings, which represent unique Chinese cultural heritage. In this sense, ELI and ESL instructors can use this resource to integrate culture into language teaching. However, instructors need to aware that some Chinese students have two names: one English and one Chinese. The choice of what teachers or students call a Chinese student is fraught with complex symbolism. The student him or herself may choose a particular name for reasons that are not clear to teachers and classmates. For the teacher or students to insist on using a particular name, believing that provides support for the Chinese student as an L2 learner may be the wrong choice. It is vital for teachers to be attentive to Chinese students' selection of a name.

Chinese keepsakes, as material artifacts, functioned as cultural and linguistic resources for students to make and design meanings. These keepsakes that contained meaningful memories exemplified their historical moments, which bridged their past selves to current moments to fashion present selves and projected to their future. These artifacts, as products of symbolic interactions (Blumer, 1969) formed their physical and cultural world where they constantly

shaped and reshaped who they were, how they interacted with people and the world, and how they interpreted the relationships between them and their keepsakes. For the teacher, students' keepsakes can be used as teaching and learning resources, because each keepsake is a story. In addition, teachers can know about their students through their keepsakes, because their keepsakes materialized their unique identities.

### **Teaching Students to Engage with Smartphones**

Even though smartphones in this research helped these participants create and increase opportunities to engage in communities of L2 literacies practices, such as expanding vocabulary, searching for information relevant to class, enriching cultural and linguistic knowledge, and facilitating purposeful and meaningful conversations, instructors need to teach ELI and ESL students how to properly engage with smartphones, such as how to direct students to use smartphones in a smart way, how to avoid students using their smartphones to check emails, play video games, or chat with friends in class, and how to optimize advantages and minimize disadvantages of smartphones in L2 learning and socialization.

### **Future Research**

Due to the limited nature of this research with respect to the sample size, time, gender, age, and the special setting, future research can be conducted to minimize these limitations. First, future research will need to expand the sample size in terms of participant numbers, different genders, different ages, and different cultural and educational backgrounds to investigate the similarities and differences of L2 learning experiences resulting from those factors. Also, future research may consider an ethnographic case study to explore how Chinese ELI students and ESL students interact with their instructors and professors, classmates, and local people in different settings, such as the ELI setting, the mainstream class setting, and the local organization setting.

In order to obtain a whole picture of Chinese ELI and ESL students' L2 learning experiences, the researcher will need to interview their instructors, professors, and their classmates. The researcher will observe their classes and take field notes. Also, documents including homework sheets, copies of school work, test papers, essays, and other artifacts may be collected as data resources. More importantly, even though smartphones had played a significant role in these ELI students' L2 learning and identity negotiation, other digital tools, modes, and ways of using them may also will be examined to study and understand Chinese ELI and ESL students' L2 learning experience, such as how Chinese ELI and ESL students make digital stories to negotiate their identities.

### **Conclusion**

For newly arrived Chinese ELI students, English proficiency is a prerequisite for their community involvement, identity (re)construction, and integration into the host society. This research focused on various communities in which three Chinese ELI students' linguistic and cultural enrichment took place. This study explored how the students interacted with multiple modes and tools to negotiate their identities. It also examined to what extent multimodality influenced the Chinese ELI students' identity (re)construction. The findings of this research indicated that the newly arrived Chinese ELI students struggled with identity negotiation in light of their limited L2 literacies skills. However, the use of multiple modes and tools improved their L2 learning situations and further facilitated their L2 learning outcomes, which functioned as affordances for them to gain access to communities of L2 practices to become recognizable and acceptable group members.

The ELI students used smart phones to visit websites to search for pictures, videos, written texts, and oral texts to facilitate their L2 acquisition and socialization in different

communities. The combination of digital tools and multiple modes helped them build multiple and dynamic identities. This research also suggested that the students' Chinese names and keepsakes provided support for their agency, which encouraged them to take advantage of multiple modes and tools to participate in various communities of L2 literacies practices in order to develop viable and constructive identities. Constructive identities enhanced their agency and empowered them to engage in L2 activities, which formed a circle of identity, agency, multimodality, and participation.

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APPENDIX A:  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL



May 9, 2016

Min Wang  
Department of Curriculum & Instruction  
College of Education  
The University of Alabama  
Box 870232

Re: IRB # 15-OR-351 (Revision) "The Influence of Multimodality on International Chinese Students' Identity Negotiation While Using L2 Literacies Skills"

Dear Ms. Wang:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has reviewed the revision to your previously approved expedited protocol. The board has approved the change in your protocol.

Please remember that your approval period expires one year from the date of your original approval, November 10, 2015, not the date of this revision approval.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number. Changes in this study cannot be initiated without IRB approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to participants.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

  
Carpantato T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP  
Director & Research Compliance Officer  
Office of Research Compliance

## INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT (Adult)

Dear Potential Participant:

You are invited to participate in this research study conducted by Min Wang from The Department of Education at The University of Alabama. I hope to learn how international Chinese students at the ELI use multimodality to negotiate their identities while using L2 literacy skills. Multimodality means different modes, such as music, gesture, moving and still images, pictures, videos, written or oral texts, which are used to facilitate second language learning. Negotiation refers to Chinese ELI students' resistance to the stigmatized identities. They might use multiple modes to develop their English in order to show who they are and how they interact with others and the target language community. There will be six student participants involved in this research. You are selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an ELI student and you meet the eligibility requirements for my study.

Data for this research consist of four sources: 1) participant observation in which activities and interactions between the teacher and students and students and students will be audio taped and field notes will be taken; 2) informal interviews with Chinese international students; 3) documents; 4) the researcher's reflection on observations, interviews, and field notes.

If you decide to participate, I will e-mail you to schedule interviews on campus, such as in the education library or Gorgas library. There will be three interviews. The interview questions include:

1. What are your Chinese and English names? What do they mean? Which name do you prefer to use in the ELI setting? Why?
2. How many years have you been studying English? How do you perceive yourself as an ELI student or an English learner?
3. How often do you use English in and out of class?
4. How are you grouped in class? Do you like the same ethnic group or mixed group when you take part in group discussions? Why?
5. How often do you hang out with international or American students? Why?
6. Have you ever experienced embarrassment due to your English language barriers or cultural differences? If so, give me an example or examples. How did you feel at that moment? Can you explain it by using a symbol or an artifact (e.g. a piece of music, a painting, a drawing, an emoticon, a word or some words, or something else)? Why did you feel this way?
7. What kinds of modes and tools do you use to study English in class and out of class? How often do you use them? How helpful do you think they are to your English study? Do you think your roles change when you use different modes and tools to study English? If so, in what ways?

All the interviews take place during your personal time. Also, class observations are another source of data collection. I will observe your reading and writing class (1.5 hours) in week two, listening and speaking class (1hour) in week three, and structure (1hour) in week four. The purpose of classroom observations is to know how you interact with your instructors and your classmates. Which language do you use in class? Are you active or passive in class? If you are

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not willing to participate in class activities, the researcher will explore the reasons behind the behavior, which is one of the aims of this research.

I will record the whole process of interviews and take notes when I observe your classes using a tape recorder. If you do not feel comfortable with tape recording I will not tape record the interviews and observations.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with your participation in this study, but you may feel uncomfortable or stressed during the interview. You will not receive any direct benefits by participating in this study but you may feel good about helping us learn more about how multimodality influences second language learners' identity negotiation.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be used to identify you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Subject identities will be kept confidential by assumed names. The recordings will be stored in a password protected computer owned by the main investigator. The recordings will be destroyed after they have been copied to a transcript. I will not release any personal information to any other person for any reason unless you ask me to do so.

Your participation is voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable to answer any questions, you can choose not to answer. Your decision whether or not to participate in this research will not affect your relationship with the University of Alabama or the researcher. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact 205-239-0130 or [mwang35@crimson.ua.edu](mailto:mwang35@crimson.ua.edu). You can also contact my advisor, Dr. Sekeres by phone 205.348.1400 or at [dcsekeres@ua.edu](mailto:dcsekeres@ua.edu) or Dr. Dilin Liu by phone 205.348. 5076 or at [dliu@ua.edu](mailto:dliu@ua.edu). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact Ms. Tanta Myles, The University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer, at 205-348-8461, or toll free 877-820-3066. You may also ask questions, make a suggestion, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at [http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO\\_Welcome.html](http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html). After your participation, you are encouraged to complete the survey for research participants that are online there, or you may ask the researcher for a copy of it. You may also email us at [participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu](mailto:participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu). You will be offered a copy of this form to keep.

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the information provided above, that you willingly agree to participate, that you may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty, that you will receive a copy of this form, and that you are not waiving any legal claims.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Consultant participant signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Yes  I agree to have the interview audio recorded

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No  I do not agree to have the interview audio recorded

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please return this form to Min Wang before 05/04/2016 by using the attached self-addressed, stamped envelope. Thank you.

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## APPENDIX B:

### HONGJUN'S READING MATERIAL

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ID: A

#### Unit 3

##### True/False

Indicate whether the statement is true or false.

#### What Is Happening to the Bees?

Imagine a world with no apples, peppers, lettuce, berries, melons, nuts, and many other fruits and vegetables. Could this happen? If we don't take care of the honeybees, it might. Honeybees play a crucial role in our food supply, but their significance has not always been recognized—until now. Honeybees are important because they pollinate a wide range of plants, especially the plants that we eat. When bees gather nectar, which is their food, they move from one flower to another, transferring tiny grains of pollen from one flower to another. Pollination is necessary for plants to form seeds and fruit. Without pollinators, like honeybees, we would have no fruits, nuts, seeds, or vegetables; and most plants would not be able to reproduce.

Honeybees are the world's most important pollinators. Each bee visits up to 2,000 flowers a day. One third of all the food we eat has been pollinated by honeybees. We also rely on animals for food, and much of their food requires pollination by honeybees. One scientist estimates that the global value of the work done by honeybees in food production is about 250 billion dollars every year.

In 2006, honeybees mysteriously began dying by the thousands, and they continue to die at an alarming rate. Experts are worried that if this trend continues, it could seriously disrupt our food supply. Scientists are racing to discover the cause of what they have called *colony collapse disorder* (CCD). Intensive research has revealed that the causes of CCD are complex. The immediate cause is a virus that is carried by tiny creatures called *mites*, which live on honeybees' bodies. Normally, honeybees can survive in spite of both the mites and the virus, but recently, this has changed. The virus is killing them and there appears to be no cure.

Research suggests there are several reasons for this change. Many farms use chemicals to prevent crop diseases and to kill insects that damage crops. Scientists believe that some of these chemicals may contribute to CCD. The chemicals weaken the bees, which makes them more vulnerable to the virus carried by the mites. Another factor may be the nature of the work that honeybees do. Wild bees gather food from many different wildflowers; in contrast, most honeybees gather nectar from commercial crops on farms. In developed countries, farms typically grow just one or two crops. So, for example, when almond trees are blooming, farmers bring in thousands of bees in trucks to pollinate the trees. When there are no crops in bloom, beekeepers give the bees sugar water, but this is not very nutritious, so bees become weak, and again, more vulnerable to the virus.

What can be done to avert a crisis? Experts offer several suggestions. First, reduce or eliminate the use of chemicals near bee colonies. Second, they advise farmers to plant wildflowers so honeybees can have a steady, healthy diet. This step has an additional benefit in that the wildflowers will attract other, wild pollinators. Until there is a cure for CCD, it will also be essential to diversify our pollinators beyond domestic honeybees. These include butterflies, wild species of bees, and even small birds. We will need several different strategies to save the honeybees and protect the food supply.

**Instructions:** Refer to the reading "What Is Happening to the Bees?" For each statement, answer *True* or *False*.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Several factors are probably responsible for the widespread death of honeybees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Honeybees pollinate plants as they gather their food.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Most of the food that we eat has been pollinated by honeybees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Some scientists believe farm chemicals have made bees more vulnerable to the virus.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. The main idea of the fourth paragraph is that mites are killing the honeybees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Humans are very dependent on honeybees.

**Multiple Choice**

Identify the choice that best completes the statement or answers the question.

**Instructions:** Refer to the reading “What Is Happening to the Bees?” Each of the following sentences, which are from the reading, has a word in bold that may be unfamiliar. Choose the best dictionary definition for each word.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Honeybees play a crucial role in our food supply, but their significance has not always been **recognized**—until now. (Paragraph 1)
- v [T] To know something or someone because you have seen or heard the person or thing before
  - v [T] To accept that something is true or important
  - v [T] To officially accept an organization or government
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. When bees gather nectar, which is their food, they move from one flower to another, transferring tiny **grains** of pollen from one flower to another. (Paragraph 1)
- n [U] A food crop such as corn or wheat
  - n [C] A tiny piece of something hard, such as sand or a seed
  - n [U] The natural pattern of lines, for example, in wood
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Scientists are racing to discover the cause of what they have called **colony collapse disorder** (CCD). (Paragraph 3)
- n [U] A situation in which things are messy and disorganized
  - n [U] A situation in which people behave in a noisy, uncontrolled way in public
  - n [C] A mental or physical illness
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The **immediate** cause is a virus that is carried by tiny creatures called *mites*, which live on honeybees’ bodies. (Paragraph 3)
- adj Happening without delay
  - adj Very close; nearby
  - adj Just before or just after something in a sequence
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Many farms use chemicals to prevent **crop** diseases and to kill insects that damage **crops**. (Paragraph 4)
- n [C] Plants that are grown for food
  - v [T] To cut to a particular size or length
  - n [C] A group of things or people that arrive at the same time

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

ID: A

- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Second, they advise farmers to plant wildflowers so honeybees can have a **steady**, healthy diet. (Paragraph 5)
- a. *adj* Developing in a gradual and continuous manner
  - b. *adj* Not changing; consistent
  - c. *v* [T] To hold something to control it so that it does not move

## APPENDIX C:

### LIHUA'S READING MATERIAL

#### The Chaser

by John Collier

Alan Austen, as nervous as a kitten, went up certain dark and creaky stairs in the neighbourhood of Pell Street, and peered about for a long time on the dim landing before he found the name he wanted written obscurely on one of the doors.

He pushed open this door, as he had been told to do, and found himself in a tiny room, which contained no furniture but a plain kitchen table, a rocking-chair, and an ordinary chair. On one of the dirty buff-coloured walls were a couple of shelves, containing in all perhaps a dozen bottles and jars.

An old man sat in the rocking-chair, reading a newspaper. Alan, without a word, handed him the card he had been given. "Sit down, Mr. Austen," said the old man very politely. "I am glad to make your acquaintance."

"Is it true," asked Alan, "that you have a certain mixture that has—er—quite extraordinary effects?"

"My dear sir," replied the old man, "my stock in trade is not very large—I don't deal in laxatives and teething mixtures—but such as it is, it is varied. I think nothing I sell has effects which could be precisely described as ordinary."

"Well, the fact is—" began Alan.

"Here, for example," interrupted the old man, reaching for a bottle from the shelf. "Here is a liquid as colourless as water, almost tasteless, quite imperceptible in coffee, milk, wine, or any other beverage. It is also quite imperceptible to any known method of autopsy."

"Do you mean it is a poison?" cried Alan, very much horrified.

"Call it a glove-cleaner if you like," said the old man indifferently. "Maybe it will clean gloves. I have never tried. One might call it a life-cleaner. Lives need cleaning sometimes."

"I want nothing of that sort," said Alan.

"Probably it is just as well," said the old man. "Do you know the price of this? For one teaspoonful, which is sufficient, I ask five thousand dollars. Never less. Not a penny less."

"I hope all your mixtures are not as expensive," said Alan apprehensively.

"Oh dear, no," said the old man. "It would be no good charging that sort of price for a love potion, for example. Young people who need a love potion very seldom have five thousand dollars. Otherwise they would not need a love potion."

"I am glad to hear that," said Alan.

"I look at it like this," said the old man. "Please a customer with one article, and he will come back when he needs another. Even if it is more costly. He will save up for it, if necessary."

"So," said Alan, "you really do sell love potions?"

"If I did not sell love potions," said the old man, reaching for another bottle, "I should not have mentioned the other matter to you. It is only when one is in a position to oblige that one can afford to be so confidential."

"And these potions," said Alan. "They are not just—just—er—"

"Oh, no," said the old man. "Their effects are permanent, and extend far beyond the mere casual impulse. But they include it. Oh, yes, they include it. Bountifully, insistently. Everlastingly."

"Dear me!" said Alan, attempting a look of scientific detachment. "How very interesting!"

"But consider the spiritual side," said the old man.

"I do indeed," said Alan.

"For indifference," said the old man, "they substitute devotion. For scorn, adoration. Give one tiny measure of this to the young lady—its flavour is imperceptible in orange juice, soup, or cocktails—and however gay and giddy she is, she will change altogether. She will want nothing but solitude and you."

"I can hardly believe it," said Alan. "She is so fond of parties."

"She will not like them anymore," said the old man. "She will be afraid of the pretty girls you may meet."

"She will actually be jealous?" cried Alan in a rapture. "Of me?"

"Yes, she will want to be everything to you."

"She is already. Only she doesn't care about it."

"She will, when she has taken this. She will care intensely. You will be her sole interest in life."

"Wonderful!" cried Alan.

"She will want to know all you do," said the old man. "All

80 that has happened to you during the day. Every word of it. She will want to know what you are thinking about, why you smile suddenly, why you are looking sad."

"That is love!" cried Alan.

85 "Yes," said the old man. "How carefully she will look after you! She will never allow you to be tired, to sit in a draught, to neglect your food. If you are an hour late, she will be terrified. She will think you are killed, or that some siren has caught you."

"I can hardly imagine Diana like that!" cried Alan, overwhelmed with joy.

90 "You will not have to use your imagination," said the old man. "And, by the way, since there are always sirens, if by any chance you *should*, later on, slip a little, you need not worry. She will forgive you, in the end. She will be terribly hurt, of course, but she will forgive you—in the end."

95 "That will not happen," said Alan ferently.

"Of course not," said the old man. "But if it did, you need not worry. She would never divorce you. Oh, no! And, of course, she herself will never give you the least, the very least grounds for—uneasiness."

100 "And how much," said Alan, "is this wonderful mixture?"

"It is not as dear," said the old man, "as the glove-cleaner, or life-cleaner, as I sometimes call it. No. That is five thousand dollars, never a penny less. One has to be older than you are, to indulge in that sort of thing. One has to save up for it."

105 "But the love potion?" said Alan.

"Oh, that," said the old man, opening the drawer in the kitchen table, and taking out a tiny, rather dirty-looking phial. "That is just a dollar."

110 "I can't tell you how grateful I am," said Alan, watching him fill it.

"I like to oblige," said the old man. "Then customers come back, later in life, when they are rather better off, and want more expensive things. Here you are. You will find it very effective."

115 "Thank you again," said Alan. "Good-bye."

"Au revoir," said the old man.

[1940]

List 5 new or interesting vocabulary words:

What is the theme of the story?

Do you agree with Alan's idea of love? Why or why not?

## APPENDIX D:

### PARTICIPANTS' WECHAT EXCHANGES

**Danny:** *As we all know virtual reality always be used in game or entertainment. At the same time, it can be used in education as a kind of unique technology. This video tells us how to use it to quality education accessible. I think it is close to min's paper topic.*

**Lihua:** *I am really interested in the virtual reality, it's an epoch-making product, I suppose. However, I have hardly ever thought it could be used as a teaching method because all the people I know who bought me the VR are only for entertainment, of course include me, and I want to buy a VR on Taobao when I am back to China, just for fun. In addition, I always think studying in a traditional way would be efficient, so I rarely use technology like ebooks or virtual laboratory to help me with my study, and I prefer to study with the real book or other real tools. By the way, paper and pen made me feel more reliable. Nevertheless, the experiential results in the video let me find that fact is not as the way I think. Maybe I will change my mind in the future after I get use to this new teaching method.*

Youdaocidian kantianxia

[http://xue. Youdao.com/sw/m/1076730?plg\\_nld=1&server=s...](http://xue.Youdao.com/sw/m/1076730?plg_nld=1&server=s...)

**Lihua:** *By the way, here is an interesting article. We could have a browse through it. Just for fun.*

**Hongjun:** *Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows. We can use VR to do many things such as experiments, games. With the VR tech, we can have a better experience than before. It can save a lot of our money to build a real lab or be allowed into a lab as what the video says at the end. However, VR also has a point that we also can't ignore-game field. There is an example. Although the example is not true, it is possible. Sword Art Online, a series of anime, gives me this kind of thought. The boss of the game company controlled the gamer by the VR Helmet. Fortunately, the protagonist solves the crisis. Moreover, young people will be enthralled with vivid games. In other words, VR is a controversial issue for me unless it's under control.*

**Hongjun:** [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson-changing\\_education\\_paradigms](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson-changing_education_paradigms)  
*Hello everyone. This is a topic about education for you. After watching this video and combining with the method of education that you take now and you've taken before, what's your opinion education (ex: the difference between Chinese one and American one)?*

**Danny:** *I couldn't have said it better. In this video, the guy thinks there are some common negative and non-effectively methods which used in education. He illustrates it by facts and statistics about it.*

**Danny:** I think both of two countries (China and USA) meet a huge challenge in education. Personally, I think Chinese parents pay more attention to the next generations' education, college entrance examination is a typical example. And it became an unpredicted trend when government made the education policy. It let us feel more pressure than other country's students. On the other hand, USA have other education problems. The video shows me three kinds of troubling trend (I forgot some details)

**Hongjun:** Well. That's right, but we can't avoid it. What we can do is to choose the way we like.

**Hongjun:** Education is associated with our future and our country's future.

**Hongjun:** In my opinion, the duty that we inherit the knowledge and use it belongs us and teachers.

**Danny:** Yes, the education is associated with our future career and lifestyle. I hope the government can make some education policy to support education although economy has the priority in China. However, compared with the past, the government in China made a huge progressive (education revolution). We can find many facts and changes if we observe carefully.

**Hongjun:** I also know, in China, the government has done something on education. That is revolution of college entrance examination. So called GaoKao. I mean it's not 'has done'. It should be a progressive one. Even though some people said that what the government did on CEE is unfair, I still believe that's correct.

**Lihua:** Increasingly people choose English as their second language. Calculated based on the number of people with English as a mother tongue, English may be the world's third-largest language, but it is the world's most widely spoken second language. World 60% of the letters are written in English, and more than 510 million people from more than 50 countries have elected to learn English as a second language. Because the widely use of English, it was accepted by more people, and became the most popular language in the world. However, with the development of English, some minority language is dying at a faster pace. Whether English will dominate the world? From the current trend, it is possible. What do you think about this problem? Is that good or bad?

**Hongjun:** Darwin said 'survival of fittest.' In my opinion, it's suitable for not animals but language. If people find a kind of language is easier to learn or having more advantage than another one, more and more people will turn to it.

**Lihua:** Yes, I agree with you, but from a cultural point of view, no one wants to see their culture be invaded. Language always stands by the culture of a country, so it should not be abandoned because of the minority. The disappearance of language can destroy the cultural diversity.

**Danny:** *as to the question whether English will dominate the world, 这个真的不好说。 In my opinion, some ancient language is the best like Greek or Hebrew. Compared with that English is a simple language which has already lost many specific things.*

**Lihua:** *Each language has its charm. You should learn to accept and appreciate it.*

**Danny:** *Maybe.*

**Lihua:** *As we all know, some ancient culture have already disappeared in Africa. Maybe we never know them, but it does not mean they do not exist.*

**Danny:** *because the requirements of civilization developing, everything will change. Some products are the typical sign. Because the first rule of create is let our life more convince than past. So, we lost more and become lazy. Maybe we will meet more fat or plump guys in the next four decades.*

**Hongjun:** *Tests, exams or quizzes have accompanied us for many years during primary school. We hate these annoying things; however, we have to do them. The question is, what is meaning and function of the tests, exams and quizzes to us or society?*

**Lihua:** *The examination is an assessment of students' learning at the previous stage, I think. We can learn about our own shortcomings and some of the things that still need to be improved through the exam. In addition, I suppose the examination is not only a kind of evaluation but also a good practice. During the exam, we have to integrate knowledge effectively and make use of it. I think it's a good way to practice ourselves. No pressure, no power. The pressure given to us by the exam is my biggest motivation. Have a good night.*

**Hongjun:** *As an ordinary student, I do not like test, neither. But I believe we need these. In our daily life, as you said, it is an assessment that shows how we learn about the knowledge. It can help us to find ourselves disadvantage and give direction that we should go to. For the society, in my opinion, tests can classify people. I mean showing a job that a person could do. Furthermore, talents can be shown by tests. With the tests, societies can develop and progress.*

**Danny:** *In my personal view, examination just a way to test your level. However, many students graduate from universities always complain that most of knowledge learned in campus can't be used by us in our occupation or ordinary life. They group of students confused about the educational rule. So, the type of exam is necessary? Maybe, we need more experiences rather than examination.*

**Lihua:** *Do you know the full name of KFC? Do you know the correct pronunciation of MacDonald's? We know and shop in foreign brands like "Calvin Klein", "Dior", or "Louis Vuitton", but few people know the correct pronunciation of these brands. It is embarrassed that we talk about these brands with some foreign friends, but we do not know how to pronounce correctly. We lead off with a simple example: what is correct pronunciation of MacDonald's? Actually I do not even know how to spell it. Therefore, I suppose we should learn English from our daily lives if we want to make our English closer to the native speaker of English.*

**Hongjun:** *Trust me. It doesn't matter.*

**Danny:** *It is fine.*

APPENDIX E:

GRADING AND PROFICIENCY SCALE FOR ELI STUDENTS

English Language Institute

(Proficiency Scale, page 2)

By the end of each level, students can...

Name of Class	Level 4 (A2/B1) (High-Intermediate Proficiency)	Level 5 (B1/B2) (Low-Advanced Proficiency)	Level 6 (B2/C1) (High-Advanced Proficiency)
<b>Reading and Writing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand complex multi-page texts (600-800 words)</li> <li>Write basic five-paragraph essays of 700 words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand unsimplified academic texts of multiple pages (800-1000 words)</li> <li>Write essays of 800 words using varied rhetorical modes and varied organization and transition techniques</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read and understand unadapted academic literature of multiple pages (1000-1200 words) from a variety of fields</li> <li>Write 1200-word essays that incorporate citations and go beyond the 5-paragraph model</li> </ul>
<b>Speaking and Listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak and support opinions in extended discussions on somewhat complex issues</li> <li>Listen to and understand 70% of conversation on both familiar and unfamiliar topics, including short academic lectures, when spoken at near-normal conversational rate and with occasional repetition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak and express ideas in extended formal and informal conversation on complex issues</li> <li>Listen to and understand 70% of both face-to-face and adapted conversation at near-normal to normal rate of speech with some repetition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Speak fluently with little or no hesitation in formal and informal conversations on practical or academic topics</li> <li>Listen to and understand 70% of complex discourse, including academic lectures, which is spoken at the normal rate of speech without much rephrasing or rewording</li> </ul>
<b>Structure</b>	<p>Understand and use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adverb clauses of time</li> <li>the passive</li> <li>modals</li> <li>subject/verb agreement</li> </ul>	<p>Understand and use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>noun clauses</li> <li>adjective clauses</li> <li>gerunds and infinitives</li> </ul>	<p>Understand and use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>coordinating conjunctions</li> <li>adverb clauses</li> <li>connectives that express cause / effect and contrast</li> <li>conditional sentences and wishes</li> </ul>

APPENDIX F:  
DANNY'S READING MATERIAL

**The Death Penalty**

What would be your reaction if someone killed a person you love? Ten years ago, Anne, a beautiful child, was shopping with her parents in the shopping mall. She asked her parents' permission to buy an ice cream. Her father kept an eye on her but in just one second he lost her. They called the police for investigation and the police worked very hard to find her. Unfortunately, they found the body of the girl close to the river. She was kidnapped, raped, and murdered. When the police captured the killer, he didn't feel any regret for what he had done. This is an awful crime, and the criminal should be punished not just with jail but also with his life.

One reason why criminals should be punished with their life is to bring justice to the families. The families of the victims suffer from the loss of their family members; they have very hurt feelings. These feelings could drive them to more problems if the victims' family does not see that the legal system is taking the appropriate action and punishing the criminal with the punishment they deserve. Moreover, the death penalty brings justice to the criminal's family. By punishing the criminal, his/her family will be saved from the victim's family's revenge.

In addition, criminals should receive the death penalty to protect society. Due to the death penalty, people are more likely to think before committing a crime, thus reducing the crime rate. Also, the death penalty removes bad people from society; therefore, they will not go back to the streets and commit these crimes again. In brief, the death penalty can be used to keep order in society.

When someone you loved is killed, a person will never forget that moment and will think about that moment all their life. Losing a son or daughter is unforgivable and deserves a harsh punishment. Jail is not enough. When a person takes away the moments that a mother or father could have had with their son or daughter, the killer should have to pay. Life is the right of every person and killers take away this right. For example, in 2004, six men in New Delhi, India violated a young girl. They were sentenced to twenty years in prison. The people of India were extremely angry and protested causing the government to change their minds to the death penalty. In this example, the Indian people wanted a heavier punishment. Therefore, the only punishment that can give some peace to the victim's family is the death penalty. Killing is an unforgivable crime.

In conclusion, the death penalty should be an important governmental action to give justice to the victims and their families and to protect society. Because some crimes are considered unforgivable, the death penalty is the only option and will, therefore, reduce crime and create a safe environment for all to live in.

## Handguns Kill!

Imagine enjoying a movie at Cinema 10, eating a meal at Taco Bell, or even sitting in a history class at Carman-Ainsworth High School while people all around you are carrying loaded guns! Although this may seem unbelievable, it is possible because the second amendment of the United States Constitution gives citizens the right to possess and carry guns. It is understandable that Americans would want to possess guns, such as shotguns and rifles, for the popular sport of hunting. However, it is ridiculous that our government would allow people to carry handguns. Handgun possession should be strictly limited because they are made solely to kill people, they have increased the murder rate in the U.S., and they have even allowed children to easily kill other children.

Handguns should be outlawed for ordinary citizens because their main purpose is simply to kill other human beings. Our government seems to want to protect us. For example, seatbelt laws and motorcycle helmet laws were created to protect our lives. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enforces pollution laws to keep us safe and healthy. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) inspects food and tests drugs to make sure American citizens are not harmed by unsafe food and dangerous drugs. However, the government allows just about anyone to own and walk around with guns. It does not appear the government really cares about its peoples' safety. If it did, handguns would be outlawed for the general public because their only purpose is to kill people.

In addition, the government should ban the possession of handguns because the homicide and robbery rate in the U.S. is much greater than in other countries where there are stricter handgun laws. For instance, according to (source), from 1987 to 1996, 52% of all homicides in the U.S. involved handguns while only 14% of all homicides in Canada involved handguns. Also, between 1987 and 1996, firearm homicide rates increased by 2% in the United States but decreased by 7% in Canada. Furthermore, handgun homicide rates in the U.S. are 15.3 times higher than in Canada. Finally, firearm robbery rates in the U.S. are 3.5 times higher than in Canada. It is evident that homicide and robbery rates involving handguns are higher in the U.S. where handgun laws are not as strict as in Canada. The high crime rate is another reason handguns should be banned.

The third and most important reason that citizens should not possess handguns is because handguns can easily get into the hands of little children. For example, about one and a half years ago, a six year old boy in the Beecher School District took a loaded handgun to school and shot and killed a six year old female classmate. This young boy may not have understood the concept of death. However, because he had easy access to a handgun, he was able to hurt someone he didn't like. This has happened all over the country, like at Columbine High School and many other places. It is unfortunate that this happens, but we shouldn't be shocked. After all, the law allows people to own guns, guns made simply to kill.

In conclusion, handguns create an unsafe environment and should be outlawed. Some may argue they are needed for self-defense, but if no one except police officials had handguns, there would be no need for that kind of defense. If handguns were outlawed, homicides would decrease, children could not obtain guns, and the country would be less violent. Until the law is changed, people will continue to kill other people.

## APPENDIX G:

### ANALYSIS OF WECHAT EXCHANGES

**Danny:** “*As we all know virtual reality always be used in game or entertainment. At the same time, it can be used in education as a kind of unique technology. This video tells us how to use it to quality education accessible. I think it is close to min’s paper topic.*”

#### **Analysis 1**

Danny gave a strong commitment to the truth of virtual reality in game and entertainment in the first sentence, which functioned as a hook for his topic. So in the second sentence, he brought about his focus on virtual reality in education. In the following sentence he briefly introduced this topic, which he thought this was close to the researcher’s study. Comparative to his last introduction of the leading discussion, this prologue was much more concrete and engaging. This piece of writing helped him gain more confidence and strengthened his voice as a leading discussant.

**Lihua:** “*I am really interested in the virtual reality, it’s an epoch-making product, I suppose. However, I have hardly ever thought it could be used as a teaching method because all the people I know who bought me the VR are only for entertainment, of course include me, and I want to buy a VR on Taobao when I am back to China, just for fun. In addition, I always think studying in a traditional way would be efficient, so I rarely use technology like ebooks or virtual laboratory to help me with my study, and I prefer to study with the real book or other real tools. By the way, paper and pen made me feel more reliable. Nevertheless, the experiential results in the video let me find that fact is not as the way I think. Maybe I will change my mind in the future after I get use to this new teaching method.*”

Youdaocidian kantianxia Rhetorical, transitional words or phrases, hedges, registers,

[http://xue.Youdao.com/sw/m/1076730?plg\\_nld=1&server=s...](http://xue.Youdao.com/sw/m/1076730?plg_nld=1&server=s...)

**Lihua:** *By the way, here is an interesting article. We could have a browse through it. Just for fun.*

#### **Analysis 2**

In this exchange, Lihua used *I suppose*, *hardly*, *rarely*, *by the way*, and *maybe* to indicate his stance on the virtual lab. He was not sure if the virtual reality is an epoch-making, so he added *I suppose* at the end of the sentence, which mitigated his certainty about his statement. The hedge *by the way* in the sentence “By the way, paper and pen made me feel more reliable” functioned as the complementary information to assist in explaining why he preferred to study

with physical books and other traditional tools. But he might change his idea someday in the future, because he employed *maybe* in the last sentence to hint at the information.

Also, he used a series of transitional words and phrases to make his argument cohesive and coherent, such as *however*, *in addition*, and *nevertheless*. He first stated his attitude toward the virtual reality. But in the second sentence, he used *however* to contrast his unawareness of the virtual reality with its popularity in teaching. In the next sentence he explained why he did not know much about influence of virtual reality on teaching. He used *in addition* to give additional information to the reason. However, the video showed him that the virtual reality did revolutionize the science class. So, he might change his mind someday. The piece above reflected Lihua's logic of thinking and reasoning skills. He voiced as an academic person who had a good command of written competence.

**Hongjun:** “*Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows. We can use VR to do many things such as experiments, games. With the VR tech, we can have a better experience than before. It can save a lot of our money to build a real lab or be allowed into a lab as what the video says at the end. However, VR also has a point that we also can't ignore-game field. There is an example. Although the example is not true, it is possible. Sword Art Online, a series of anime, gives me this kind of thought. The boss of the game company controlled the gamer by the VR Helmet. Fortunately, the protagonist solves the crisis. Moreover, young people will be enthralled with vivid games. In other words, VR is a controversial issue for me unless it's under control.”*

### **Analysis 3**

In this exchange, Hongjun combined factual statements with epistemic modality (Fairclough, 2003) and deontic modality to present his argument. For example, Hongjun started with a factual statement that *Virtual reality has a promising future just as what the video shows*, through which he made an evaluative statement by using the word *promising*. This word signaled a desirable effect. So, in the following three sentences, he listed a series of possibilities that virtual reality would bring to humans. The prediction Hongjun made were modalized statements, which the values were deeply embedded in the text. The three *cans* in the three sentences not only marked Hongjun's evaluative statements, but also echoed the word *promising* in the first sentence. The organization of this piece was cohesive and coherent. In the fourth sentence, Hongjun used *however* to make a contrast of the latter part of the exchange to the former part, because virtual reality did have some negative influence on human's life. In the last sentence, Hongjun made a conclusion that virtual reality was a controversial issue. If it was under control, it can be beneficial; otherwise, it could cause problems. Hongjun's response to Danny's topic was cogent and persuasive, which displayed his logical and analytical thinking skills.

**Hongjun:** [https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson-changing\\_education\\_paradigms](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson-changing_education_paradigms)

*“Hello everyone. This is a topic about education for you. After watching this video and combining with the method of education that you take now and you’ve taken before, what’s your opinion education (ex: the difference between Chinese one and American one)?”*

#### **Analysis 4**

Beginning with a greeting, Hongjun acted as a speaker or presenter. In the following sentences, he used the second person pronoun to address his group members, because he led this topic. He had kind of power to ask what his members needed to do. In this piece, Hongjun identified himself as a discussion leader and an opinion solicitor.

**Danny:** *“I couldn’t have said it better. In this video, the guy thinks there are some common negative and non-effectively methods which used in education. He illustrates it by facts and statistics about it.”*

**Danny:** *“I think both of two countries (China and USA) meet a huge challenge in education. Personality, I think Chinese parents pay more attention to the next generations’ education, college entrance examination is a typical example. And it became an unpredicted trend when government made the education policy. It let us feel more pressure than other country’s students. On the other hand, USA have other education problems. The video shows me three kinds of troubling trend (I forgot some details)”*

#### **Analysis 5**

Danny totally agreed with the TED presenter, Dr. Ken Robinson who talked about *changing education paradigms*. In his first piece, he summarized what he learned from the video, but in his second piece, he compared Chinese education and American education. He used two markers of subjective modality with the first person singular pronoun and a mental process verb (both *I think*) to show his discussion members his personal opinions. He stated that both America and China meet a big challenge in education. He also pointed out that Chinese students suffered more pressure than American students because their parents paid more attention to Gaokao. Danny’s perspectives on education showed his critical and divergent thinking skills. He actively interacted with his group members, which exhibited mixed identities.

**Hongjun:** *“Well. That’s right, but we can’t avoid it. What we can do is to choose the way we like.”*

**Hongjun:** *“Education is associated with our future and our country’s future.”*

**Hongjun:** *“In my opinion, the duty that we inherit the knowledge and use it belongs us and teachers.”*

#### **Analysis 6**

In Hongjun’s response to Danny’s post, he used a hedge *well* to present a different opinion. Even though Danny’s argument was reasonable, Hongjun had his own thinking-*but we can’t avoid*. Gaokao in China was a relatively equitable way to select students for colleges, so it

was reasonable and necessary to exist. Gaokao brought students pressure, which students cannot avoid it. Hongjun used the first person plural pronoun *we* to indicate that there was no way to avoid as Chinese students.

**Danny:** “Yes, the education is associated with our future career and lifestyle. I hope the government can make some education policy to support education although economy has the priority in China. However, compared with the past, the government in China made a huge progressive (education revolution). We can find many facts and changes if we observe carefully.”

**Hongjun:** *I also know, in China, the government has done something on education.*

*That is revolution of college entrance examination.*

*So called GaoKao.*

*I mean it's not 'has done'.*

*It should be a progressive one.*

*Even though some people said that what the government did on CEE is unfair, I still believe that's correct.*

### **Analysis 7**

Danny agreed with Hongjun on the importance of education, but he hoped that the Chinese government could make and implement effective policies to support education. The marker of subjective modality with the first person singular pronoun *I hope* showed Danny's wish that the government had the ability to make a change. In Hongjun's response to Danny's post, he expressed that the Chinese government had revolutionized Gaokao, which he claimed that the revolution was helpful, even though some people doubted it. The conversational interaction between Danny and Hongjun presented these two participants's concerns about Chinese education and the government's functioning. The texts showed their styles and identities, which echoed Fairclough's (2003) perspective on texts and identification. He observes that “[who] you are is partly a matter of how you speak, how you write” (p. 159), which indexes that oral and written texts speak to identities.

**Lihua:** “Increasingly people choose English as their second language. Calculated based on the number of people with English as a mother tongue, English may be the world's third-largest language, but it is the world's most widely spoken second language. World 60% of the letters are written in English, and more than 510 million people from more than 50 countries have elected to learn English as a second language. Because the widely use of English, it was accepted by more people, and became the most popular language in the world. However, with the development of English, some minority language is dying at a faster pace. Whether English will dominate the world? From the current trend, it is possible. What do you think about this problem? Is that good or bad?”

**Hongjun:** “Darwin said ‘survival of fittest.’ In my opinion, it’s suitable for not animals but language. If people find a kind of language is easier to learn or having more advantage than another one, more and more people will turn to it.”

**Lihua:** “Yes, I agree with you, but from a cultural point of view, no one wants to see their culture be invaded. Language always stands by the culture of a country, so it should not be abandoned because of the minority. The disappearance of language can destroy the cultural diversity.”

**Danny:** “as to the question whether English will dominate the world, 这个真的不好说。 In my opinion, some ancient language is the best like Geek or Hebrew. Compared with that English is a simple language which has already lost many specific things.”

**Lihua:** “Each language has its charm. You should learn to accept and appreciate it.”

**Danny:** “Maybe.”

**Lihua:** “As we all know, some ancient culture have already disappeared in Africa. Maybe we never know them, but it does not mean they do not exist.”

**Danny:** “because the requirements of civilization developing, everything will change. Some products are the typical sign. Because the first rule of create is let our life more convince than past. So, we lost more and become lazy. May be we will meet more fat or plump guys in the next four decades.”

### **Analysis 8**

The topic Lihua led on whether English would dominate the world triggered a hot debate, in which Everybody in the discussion group participated. Hongjun like always went first. He did not give an explicit answer, but he indicated that if speaking a language had more privileges, people would learn that language, which is true. English is a perfect example. If one speaks perfect English, she will have more opportunities in terms of education, occupation, and business and so forth. Lihua showed his agreement with Hongjun, but he had a concern, that is, people should preserve their unique languages and cultures, which he used the marker of deontic modality to warn people to take this responsibility. The marker also signaled the evaluative statement, which was desirable, because no one wanted to lose their own language or culture. Danny again used a Chinese sentence 这个真的不好说 (*it is hard to say*) to show the difficulty in answering Lihua’s questions. But, he indicated that both language and culture should be diverse, learning from others, but at the same time preserving one’s own. In another round of exchange, Lihua highly recommended that people should *learn to accept and appreciate it* (language) by using the marker of deontic modality *should* again to manifest his stance, because *each language has its charm*. Danny responded to him *maybe*, which he told Lihua he might do or might not, because Danny’s commitment of himself to this statement was uncertain.

**Hongjun:** “Tests, exams or quizzes have accompanied us for many years during primary school. We hate these annoying things; however, we have to do them. The question is, what is meaning and function of the tests, exams and quizzes to us or society? “

**Lihua:** “The examination is an assessment of students’ learning at the previous stage, I think. We can learn about our own shortcomings and some of the things that still need to be improved through the exam. In addition, I suppose the examination is not only a kind of evaluation but also a good practice. During the exam, we have to integrate knowledge effectively and make use of it. I think it’s a good way to practice ourselves. No pressure, no power. The pressure given to us by the exam is my biggest motivation. Have a good night.”

**Hongjun:** “As an ordinary student, I do not like test, neither. But I believe we need these. In our daily life, as you said, it is an assessment that shows how we learn about the knowledge. It can help us to find ourselves disadvantage and give direction that we should go to. For the society, in my opinion, tests can classify people. I mean showing a job that a person could do. Furthermore, talents can be shown by tests. With the tests, societies can develop and progress.”

**Danny:** “In my personal view, examination just a way to test your level. However, many students graduate from universities always complain that most of knowledge learned in campus can’t be used by us in our occupation or ordinary life. They group of students confused about the educational rule. So, the type of exam is necessary? Maybe, we need more experiences rather than examination.”

## **Analysis 9**

Hongjun brought about a new topic: examination. In the last sentence, he asked everybody a question about the meaning and function of the test. Lihua took the first shot to answer his question. He demonstrated his strong affiliation to his statement by using I-statement *I think* and *I suppose*, which accentuated his standpoint. He also used *have to* and *can* these modal verbs to predict the possibilities and point out the obligations, which he held that examination was necessary and important. In Hongjun’s response to Lihua’s post, he first expressed his affective statement *I do not like test*, but admitted that *we need these*. He used *I believe* to show his mental process. The verb *Need* spoke to its importance to take tests. In the following sentences, Hongjun used several modal verb *cans* to illustrate the necessity of tests. Unlike Lihua and Hongjun, Danny held a different opinion, because he believed that tests were not able assess students’ real talent and performance. However, he was not certain to his own statement, because of the marker of uncertainty *maybe*.

**Lihua** Do you know the full name of KFC? Do you know the correct pronunciation of MacDonald’s? We know and shop in foreign brands like “Calvin Klein”, “Dior”, or “Louis Vuitton”, but few people know the correct pronunciation of these brands. It is embarrassed that we talk about these brands with some foreign friends, but we do not know how to pronounce correctly. We lead off with a simple example: what is correct pronunciation of MacDonald’s? Actually I do not even know how to spell it. Therefore, I suppose we should learn English from our daily lives if we want to make our English closer to the native speaker of English.

*Hongjun: Trust me. It doesn't matter.*

*Danny: It is fine.*

Conclusion: All the participants identified and were identified as different roles by posting their thoughts and arguments in a form of text. They designed Internet-based textual selves, which were dynamic, multilayered, and contradictory. They performed as information providers, standpoint solicitors, critical and divergent thinkers, competent and persuasive English learners, and expert and novice interlocutors. The WeChat discussion provided these L2 learners with a platform to converse with each other to exchange information, to build a sense of interconnectedness and place, to exercise their agency, and to develop their identities.

APPENDIX H:  
EXCERPTS OF CODES AND THEMES OF INTERVIEWS

Part 1 Danny

Excerpts of Codes and Themes of the First Interview

Codes	Themes
1. Middle class, from the east 2. Two names: English name and Chinese name 3. English proficiency level: Reading and writing is better than structure and speaking and listening	a. The nascent middle class (Stevens, 2012) b. Chinese name symbolizes familial expectations
4. Confident 5. Speaking like a native 6. Personality: Giving positive driving force 7. Setting a goal—speaking like a native 8. Success in the election 9. Interest in business	c. Self- conception d. Setting a goal (Agency)—speaking like a native e. Active in extracurricular
10. A picture of plum blossoms 11. Symbolic meaning: Persistence and resilience: Getting through circumstances	f. Keepsake—symbolic artifact—familial expectation
12. A sense of loss 13. Felt like a kid 14. Limited communicative skills 15. Conversation breakdown 16. Anxious	g. Embarrassment due to Limited English proficiency h. Limited English Proficiency and Self-positioning i. English and economic capital

<p>17. A meal cost \$ 47 18. Disgracing</p>	<p>j. Limited English Proficiency-- Self-criticism</p>
<p>19. Mistakenly Considering the chef as Chinese 20. Nervous, Unable to communicate 21. Experienced discrimination 22. Felt like an idiot 23. Humiliated 24. Set a goal-speaking like a native (the same as #7)</p>	<p>k. Embarrassment due to limited English proficiency  l. Embarrassment became a source for determination and motivation</p>
<p>m. Embarrassing at a grocery store  n. Being asked for giving back receipt  o. Anger made him insist on speaking Chinese</p>	<p>m. embarrassment due to limited English proficiency  m. Agency—insisting on Chinese identity</p>
<p>n. Difficulty in communication with Americans o. Having common interest p. Using the smartphone to help communicate q. Using body language to help communicate r. Asking for contact information s. Inviting to play ping-pong and basketball t. Becoming friends with two Americans</p>	<p>n. A move to build connections with the local community  o. Using multiple tools and modes to facilitate communication</p>
<p>p. Tring to teach ping-pong q. Being unable to verbally communicate r. Asking friends for help  s. Visiting websites and collecting information  t. Becoming friends with Americans</p>	<p>p. Another move to make a connection with the local people  q. Using available resources to facilitate communication, such as Chinese friends and multiple modes and tools</p>

u. a sense of fulfillment	r. Investment in local communities
v. An international citizen w. Chinese culture representative  x. Deepening understanding of Chinese culture y. Using technological tools and modes z. Expanding Chinese culture to others aa. Learning cultures from peers bb. A sense of pride cc. Equal, no discrimination	s. Participation in mixed group interactions  t. Mixed group functioned as an affordance for identity development  u. Using multiple tools and modes to promote identity development v. Schafolding and being schafolded w. Participation in the culture exchange facilitated self-realization x. The mixed group as a safe place
dd. Strong accents increased difficulty in understanding and communication ee. Multiple ways to deal with the problem	y. Using multiple tools and modes to minimize the difficulty in communication

Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the Second Interview

Codes	Themes
1. A 30-day project 2. Designing a 3D ship model, 3. Facing difficulties: programming, selecting materials, translating Spanish into English, and making an appointment with a librarian 4. Class presentation: Another challenge 5. Using PPT to display his project 6. Having learned from this 3D ship model designing and making 7. Having a sense of self-fulfillment	a. Gaining recognition through the language mediated activity  b. Using PPT to help present this process of the 3D ship model designing and making
8. WeChat discussion-a forum 9. The discussion required reading or listening and writing 10. Leading a discussion	c. Perception of the WeChat discussion

<p>11. Following a discussion 12. Always using the smartphone to study English</p>	<p>d. WeChat discussion helped learn English and fashion multiple identities e. Multiple tools and modes facilitate English learning</p>
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Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the Third Interview

Codes	Themes
<p>1. Language barriers-resolution 2. In class interaction 3. After class 4. Visiting websites 5. Expanding vocabulary: The Youdao dictionary 6. Preparation for IELTS 7. Making American friend 8. Watching movies and TV shows</p>	<p>a. Determination to improve listening and speaking (Agency) b. <b>Strategies for avoiding embarrassment</b> c. Using the smart phone to facilitate understanding and communication d. Investment in local communities e. Watching movies and TV shows</p>
<p>9. Smartphone: expanding vocabulary, looking for pictures and videos for daily communication and class presentation 10. Google, baidubaike 11. An example 12. smartphone: indispensable</p>	<p>f. Using the smart phone to facilitate understanding and communication</p>
<p>13. skills developed by doing presentations 14. The ability to collect information: written texts, pictures, videos, and audio materials 15. TED Talks.com 16. Responsibility</p>	<p>g. Doing Presentation by using multiple modes and tools h. Responsibility and WeChat leading discussion i. Inspiration from former knowledge and lived experience</p>

17. Lived experience	
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Part 2 Lihua

Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the First Interview

Codes	Themes
1. Working class 2. From the north 3. Using Lihua this name to ridicule English teaching in his high school 4. Parents' perception of American Education 5. coming to America for opportunities 6. A Gaokao failure 7. A determination to change "dumb and deaf" English	a. Socioeconomic background from Danny's b. Lihua, this Chinese name symbolizes an irony, a warning, and a hope for English improvement c. Parents' expectation d. Self-positioning e. "Dumb and deaf" English as a source of motivation and determination
8. Confident and active 9. Using the word "must" to indicate his obligation 10. Difficult to communicate in L2	f. Self-conception g. Decided to study English hard.
11. Made by his father 12. Useful 13. Evoking good memories 14. Thinking about his family	h. Keepsake-- Material artifact—familial expectation and love (agency)
15. Deficit in speech comprehension 16. Asking for clarifications (courage and braveness, solving problems, overcoming verbal communication fear, anxiety) 17. Changing resulted in panic  18. Getting onto the plane	i. Embarrassment due to limited English proficiency j. Asking 9 officers showed his courage and persistence

<p>19. Practicing speaking and listening to accumulate linguistic capital</p> <p>20. Community of practices</p> <p>21. Knowing about cultures</p> <p>22. Making friends and building social networking</p> <p>23. Identity (re)construction</p>	<p>k. A move to make a connection with the local community</p> <p>l. Investment in local communities</p>
<p>24. Roomed with American students</p> <p>25. Difficulty in communication with them</p> <p>26. Observing roommates</p>	<p>m. Another move to make a connection with the local community</p> <p>n. Investment in local communities</p>
<p>27. Seizing opportunities to expose to the target culture and language</p>	<p>o. Seizing opportunities</p>
<p>28. Mixed group learning beneficial for speaking and listening, knowing about other cultures, and making friends.</p> <p>29. Beneficial for thinking skills</p> <p>30. Performed as a group leader</p> <p>31. Introducing Chinese culture to classmates helped know more and deeper about Chinese culture</p>	<p>p. Participating in mixed groups to practice L2 and take on new identities</p>
<p>32. Difficulty in communication with international classmates</p> <p>33. Strategies for overcoming difficulties</p>	<p>q. Using multiple tools and modes to facilitate communication with non-native speakers in mixed groups</p>

Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the Second Interview

Codes	Themes
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Class presentation-grammar and pronunciation</li> <li>2. Boosting courage</li> <li>3. well prepared</li> <li>4. A perfection</li> <li>5. Running 30 miles in 30 days</li> <li>6. Documenting the experience and feelings</li> <li>7. Preparing for the presentation</li> <li>8. Designing the PPT</li> <li>9. Practicing 40times</li> <li>10. Becoming a TED presenter (imagined identity or possible identity and agency)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <b>Participation in WeChat discussion built textual self : a perfection, a respectful person, a responsible L2 user, and a TED presenter</b></li> </ol>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Improving writing summaries</li> <li>12. Improving grammar</li> <li>13. Beneficial for writing short essays</li> <li>14. Improving thinking skills</li> <li>15. Gaining knowledge</li> <li>16. Assuming responsibilities</li> <li>17. Selecting topics</li> <li>18. Paying close attention to members' responses</li> <li>19. Must be like a leader</li> <li>20. Different role and different task</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. <b>Identity as a discussion leader</b></li> <li>c. <b>Identity as a discussion follower</b></li> </ol>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21. Improving listening</li> <li>22. Using phones for checking words</li> <li>23. Using a pen and a notebook for facilitating understanding</li> <li>24. Using pictures and videos to help participate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Using multiple modes and tools to facilitate communication</li> </ul>
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Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the Third Interview

Codes	Themes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Language barriers –Resolution</li> <li>2. Practicing on the website everyday</li> <li>3. Culturally speaking—in anticipation of improvement</li> <li>4. Goal-oriented</li> <li>5. Interaction with roommates</li> <li>6. Expanding vocabulary: memorization, reading emails, listening to songs, watching movies.</li> <li>7. Daily English learning: paying attention to surroundings, such as road signs, billboards, and other advertisements, googling and asking others</li> <li>8. Realizing the relationship of language and culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Determination to improve listening and speaking (Agency)</li> <li>b. Investment in local communities</li> <li>c. Learning English in and through daily life</li> <li>d. Learning language and learning culture</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9. Smart phone: checking new words and grammar, searching for pictures and TED Talks</li> <li>10. Helping understand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Using his smart phone to facilitate understanding and communication</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. PPT: pictures helping understand adiposis</li> <li>12. Pictures trigger learning interest</li> <li>13. Acquiring skills unconsciously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Using PPT to facilitate understanding and trigger learning interest</li> </ul>

<p>14. Self-esteem, valuing face, making good impression</p> <p>15. Writing good summaries and posts to show insightfulness</p> <p>16. Inspiration from TED Talks and Youdao dictionary</p> <p>17. Learning English from daily life</p>	<p>g. goal-oriented: making good impression by writing insightful summaries and posts</p> <p>h. Taking advantage of good resources</p>
<p>18. goal: a successful discussion leader</p> <p>19. selecting a good topic</p> <p>20. do not want to fail</p> <p>21. Learning from being a leading discussant</p> <p>23. searching for useful information (google and youdao dictionary)</p> <p>23. Inviting members to discuss a topic and triggering valuable thinking</p>	<p>i. Setting a goal and agency</p> <p><b>j. strategies for avoiding embarrassment</b></p> <p>k. Engaging members in discussion and triggering thinking</p>
<p>24. inspiration from lived experience</p> <p>25. A story about MacDonald's</p> <p>26. wrong pronunciation</p> <p>27. embarrassing</p> <p>28. blaming self</p> <p>17. learning from daily life</p>	<p>l. Immersing in linguistic surroundings</p>
<p>18. WeChat discussion: a process of growing knowledge: learning from each other, (community of L2 literacies) learning from materials, and learning from discussions</p>	<p>m. WeChat discussion is an affordance for learning</p>
<p>19. Relaxed learning environment</p> <p>20. Learning from mistakes</p>	<p>n. Good at learning</p>

21. Learning from group members	
22. Paying attention to members' responses 24 Putting himself into group members' situation	r. Trying to be a successful discussion leader, self-fulfillment s. Practicing thinking

### Part 3: Hongjun

#### Excerpts of Codes and Themes Emerged from the First Interview

Codes	Themes
1. Middle class, from the east of China 2. No English name 3. Chinese name carries love and familial expectations 4. Parents' photo	a. Chinese name symbolizes familial expectations b. Keepsake—material artifact—familial expectation (Agency)
5. Confident L2 learner 6. Fast L2 learner	c. Self-conception
7. Inconvenient transportations 8. Facing danger while walking on the streets 9. A lack of food 10. Facing the challenge to be independent	c. A Survival challenge d. Being determined to be independent
11. Unable to use L2 12. Pointing the menu with fingers 13. Felt like a child 14. Felt stupid 15. Felt terrible	e. Limited English proficiency resulted in embarrassment
16. Listening was insufficient 17. Reading saved him	e. Reading skills helped him avoid embarrassment

<p>18. Gaining linguistic and cultural capital</p> <p>19. Learning L2 through socialization and activities</p> <p>20. Not afraid of making mistakes</p> <p>21. Coming for study</p>	<p>f. A move to make a connection with the local community</p> <p>g. Being exposed to the linguistic and cultural resources</p>
<p>22. Rich and diverse cultures</p> <p>23. Linguistic diversity</p> <p>24. Social networks (making friends)</p> <p>25. A sense of pride</p>	<p>f. Mixed groups functioned as affordances for L2 socialization</p> <p>g. Multiple modes and tools to facilitate meaning-making and develop identities</p>
<p>26. Introducing Chinese culture to the world</p> <p>27. Making sure the information was correct by doing research</p> <p>28. Assuming cultural responsibilities</p>	<p>h. Using multiple tools to reinforce a sense of authority</p>
<p>29. Making himself understood</p> <p>30. Using smartphone to help understand</p>	<p>i. Using smartphone to facilitate communication and interactions</p>

Excerpt of Codes and Themes from Hongjun's Second Interview

Codes	Themes
<p>1. Individual and collective practices</p> <p>2. Multiple modes and tools facilitated listening and speaking</p> <p>3. Quick thinking skills and reaction skills</p> <p>4. A debate in English</p>	<p>a. Using multiple modes and tools to facilitate L2 learning</p> <p>b. Using multiple modes and tools to develop identities</p>
<p>5. Well prepared for WeChat discussions</p>	<p>c. Making effort to become a competent L2 learner and user</p>
<p>6. Improving writing</p> <p>7. Selecting a topic</p> <p>8. Writing a summary</p> <p>9. Checking grammar</p> <p>10. Participating in discussion</p>	<p>d. WeChat discussion functioned as an affordance for L2 literacies practices, reading, writing, listening,</p>

11. Responding to others' posts 12. A sense of fulfillment	and gain linguistic and cultural knowledge
13. A discussion participant: following others' text messages	f. Identity as a discussion participant g. Identity as a discussion leader
14. Carefully selecting discussion topics: meaningful, interesting, and practical 15. Using smartphone to look up words and visit websites 16. Using pictures, videos, body language, and other tools and modes to interact with each other	h. Using multiple tools and modes to facilitate communication, interaction and fashion multiple identities.

Excerpt of Codes and Themes from Hongjun's the Third Interview

Codes	Themes
1. Reminding not to let it happen again 2. More exposure to the discourse, more familiar with it 3. Experience produces knowledge 4. Learning from mistakes and setbacks 5. Asking questions 6. Observing them 7. Predicting according to experience 8. Going to BCM to practice English 9. Using smartphone to study English 10. Doing presentation 11. Searching for information	a. Embarrassment as a motivation <b>b. Strategies for avoid embarrassment</b> c. Multiple modes and tools and L2 learning d. Personal interest promotes learning e. Using smart phone to google interesting things and practicing online. f. investment in local communities <b>g. Strategies for Expanding vocabulary</b>

<p>12. Making PPT slides</p> <p>Giving hints, piquing interest, and catching attention</p> <p>13. PPT helps communicate</p> <p>14. Why making PPT</p> <p>15. Personal interest</p> <p>16. Googling</p> <p>17. Making American friends</p> <p>18. Expanding vocabulary by memorizing words, watching movies, and listening to songs.</p>	<p>i. Using multiple modes and tools to facilitate learning</p> <p>j. Investment in local communities</p>
<p>19. Smartphone: learning vocabulary and facilitate conversations</p> <p>20. Internet helps understanding: pictures and videos</p> <p>21. Smartphone</p>	<p>h. The smartphone and L2 literacies practices</p>
<p>22. Learning from daily life and academic life</p> <p>23. Logical thinking</p> <p>24. What to be the best</p> <p>25. High self-expectations</p> <p>26. Expectations for group members</p> <p>27. Inspired by lived experience</p> <p>28. Ambivalent feelings about testing</p> <p>29. Frequent tests in China</p> <p>30. Testing results in frustration</p> <p>31. Expressing own idea by posting interesting topics</p> <p>32. Common thinking about education</p> <p>33. The same experience and the same topic evoking resonance</p>	<p>h. Motivation of and inspiration for the WeChat discussion</p> <p>i. WeChat discussions built textual selves</p>

<p>34. Engaging members in discussion</p> <p>35. Learning from group members</p> <p>36. Knowledge and ideas sharing</p>	<p>i. The WeChat discussion built a sense of responsibility</p>
<p>37. Exciting because graduated from ELI</p> <p>38. Confident and fluent because of diligence</p>	<p>j. The WeChat discussion made Hongjun a successful ELI learner.</p>

## APPENDIX I:

### OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

The purpose of class observations is to explore how these three Chinese ELI students interact with their classmates and instructors. The researcher will observe all the participants' classes, including speaking and listening, reading and writing, and structure. The whole total of time might be 15.15 hours. Specifically, the researcher will observe where these students sit in their respective classes, how they use various modes and tools to make meanings in class activities, how they participate in class interactions, such as involving in whole class discussions, dialoguing with their instructors and classmates, engaging in question-answer-sequence, and taking part in group discussions, and how they position and are positioned by their instructors and classmates. To answer all these questions, the researcher will carefully observe all the classes, take field notes, and write down thoughts about, reflections on and questions about the class observations. The form of class observation protocol is attached below.

### The Form of Observation Protocol

Participant Name: Class Name: Class Setting: Class Size: Seating:	Other Pertinent Information:
Descriptive Account	Researcher's Reflections and Questions

## APPENDIX J:

### THE FIRST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 请你介绍一下你自己吧。包括姓名 (中文名字和英文名字), 家庭背景, 年龄, 英语水平等等。

Introduce yourself, including your Chinese name, English name, age, family background, and English levels.

- 你如何看待或评价你自己作为一个英语学习者?

How do you perceive yourself as an ELI student or an English learner?

- 你有没有从国内带来一些对你来说特别重要的工艺品, 比如护身符, 书籍呀等等。

Did you bring any artifacts important to you to America, such as amulets, books and so on?

- 你有没有心理落差当你 到美国来之后? 平时有没有遇到什么尴尬的事?

Did you feel a sense of loss after you came to the U.S.? Did you experience embarrassment after you came here?

- 你有没有参加什么校园的文化活动来帮助你学习英语呀?  
比如咖啡时间, 文化畅谈, 以及其它的活动?

Did you participate in cultural activities on campus to improve your English, such as Café Hours, Culturally Speaking, and so forth?

- 你交过美国朋友吗? 如果有, 请你介绍一下你们是怎么认识的?  
Did you make Americans? If so, can you please tell me how and where you met?

- 你会经常在课内和课外使用英语吗?

How often do you use English in and out of class?

- 你常会跟美国人和国际学生出去玩吗? 为什么?

How often do you hang out with non-Chinese international students or American students?  
Why?

- 课堂上，你是跟中国学生在一组学习，还是跟外国学生在一组学习如果有分组活动的话？为什么？

How are you grouped in class? Do you like the same ethnic group or mixed group when you take part in group discussions? Why?

- 你跟国际同学交流有障碍吗？如果有你如何解决它？

Is it difficult to communicate with international classmates? If so, how do you deal with that?

## APPENDIX K:

### THE SECOND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 你觉得什么课对你的英语学习帮助最大？为什么？能不能举例说一说？

Which class do you think is most helpful for your English learning? Why? Can you give me some examples?

- 你是怎么看待微信聊天与英语学习的关系的？

How do you perceive the relationship between the WeChat discussion and your English learning?

- 当你在用微信聊天时，你有没有觉得你的角色有什么不同呢？

Do you think your roles changed when you participated in the WeChat discussion?

- 你平时都用些什么方式和方法以及多媒体手段或工具学习英语呢？你认为这些方法和工具有助于英语学习吗？你认为你的角色有变化吗当你使用这些方法和工具时？如果有变化，都有些什么变化呢？

What mode and tools do you use to help you study English? Do you think they are helpful? Do you think your roles change while you are using these modes and tools? If so, which kinds of changes do you experience?

## APPENDIX L:

### THE THIRD INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 你经历了一些尴尬。你觉得这些对你有什么影响？  
你有些什么学习策略去提高英语水平然后避免这种情况再发生？

You experienced embarrassment in different contexts. How did the embarrassment affect you? what are your strategies to improve your language skills to avoid the embarrassing experience?

- 你经常会用手机去查单词， 图片，  
和视频， 你可以展示给我看一下你是如何查这些资料的？  
你认为手机对你英语学习有多重要？

You used your smart phone a lot, such as checking words, searching for pictures and videos. Can you please show me how to do it? How important you think your phone is to your English learning?

- 你在听说课上用了 PPT. 它的作用是什么？

You used PPT for your presentations in your speaking and listening classes. What is the function?

- 你认为微信聊天很有用。 而且你在聊天过程中准备得很充分。  
你是从哪里学到的这些技巧。 还有其它学英语或文化的技巧吗？

WeChat: you found WeChat useful and were very articulate about the process. Where did these skills come from? What other skills do you have that you find useful in learning English or learning about culture?

- 有说你选择话题很用心。 为什么？ 你同时很关注其他组员的回复。 为什么？

You said you selected discussion topic very carefully? Why? Also, you mentioned that you paid close attention to your group members' responses to your topic. Why?

- 在最后一次讨论中， 你谈到从生活中学英语。  
你为什么会有想到这样一个话题的？ 当你的成员说没关系时， 你有什么反应？ 为什么？ (李华)

In the last discussion, you brought about learning English from our lives. Why did you choose this topic? When your group members responded: "Trust me. It doesn't matter. And it is fine." What was your reaction? Why? (for Lihua)

- 你说道微信可以帮助你丰富知识。你可不可以举一些例子呢？

You mentioned WeChat helped enrich knowledge. Can you please give me some examples?

- 语法课上，你的老师纠正了你 4 次。你觉得尴尬吗？(李华)

You were corrected by your teacher for four times in your structure class. Were you embarrassed? (for Lihua)

- 在微信聊天时，我们谈到了考试。你认为考试对我们社会的作用是什么？

What is the function of testing to our society?

- 你已经从 ELI 毕业了，你感觉怎么样？（红军）

You graduated from ELI, how do you feel? (for Hongjun)