Exploring EFL Students' Identities and Investment in Higher Education Reform Project: Two Narrative Cases

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Abstract

Identity and investment have become the two most significant concepts in the field of second language acquisition and English as a foreign language (EFL). Conducted through semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, this study focused on the narrative cases of two EFL students in the bilingual higher education project, revealing their identity changes throughout the project from a poststructural perspective. Their investment in foreign language learning was also fully explored through the analysis of a series of semi-structured interviews and diary data. The findings of this study show that identities are multiple, dynamic and contradictory, both emergent in changing sociocultural contexts and driven by individuals' own agency, and participants' identities also oscillate between the imagined communities and communities of practice. The investment of these two students in bilingual literacy is also mediated by three intertwined structures: capital, ideology and identity. In addition, participants' second language investments vary considerably, due to their different agency in English language learning.

Keywords: identity, investment model, EFL, bilingual higher education

1. Introduction

In the field of second language acquisition, classrooms have commonly been regarded as sites of struggle, wherein the learners' identities are constructed under the social, cultural, and political pressures of language learning (Kim, 2003; Norton, 2006; Teng, 2019). Researchers also argue the multiple and dynamic essence of social and individual identities (Gu, 2010; Norton & Toohey, 2001), which allows language learners to negotiate the power relations as well as adjust their investment in learning, such granting or refusing the right to speak (Norton, 2013). In the classroom, there is an intricate relationship existing between language learners and the target language, that learners can increase their cultural capital and social power through the acquisition of a wide range symbolic and material resources hidden behind the language (Darvin & Norton, 2017). Therefore, language classrooms can be an ideal place for researchers and educational agents to explore factors in relation to learners' identity construction and commitment.

The expanding English learners community in China presents a distinct second language learning environment where the learners' first and second language communities are distant and not equally dominant in population and power (Gu, 2006). English is rarely spoken outside of the classroom, and students usually lack of the opportunities to interact with other English speaking communities. In such an environment, the legitimacy of identities, in particular the cultural identities was always questioned, because traditional notions presupposed that the process of constructing new cultural identity occurred in a genuine cross-cultural communication context, which is absent in China where English is considered a foreign language (Norton & Gao, 2008). However, recent studies in identity and investment have challenged the predetermined and unchangeable boundaries between identities. For example, in Gao, Cheng and Kelly's study (2008), despite the unsatisfactory attempts to interact with English speakers, the mainland Chinese students can still shift their identities to approach their "imagined community" where English is not only associated with the target language culture, but also their own visions for the future. These studies view the second language learners are active agents who use the second language to position themselves both in a particular context and social relations and invest for their benefit instead of passively following the given norms (Kim, 2014).

In this article, the author focuses on the situations of two university students, trying to explore how their social

and cultural identities are constantly formed and represented within bilingual classrooms in China, and what factors have changed their investment in second language acquisition practice. The context of this article is a higher education reform project organised by the English Department of a comprehensive university in northern China, which involved over 60 English major students. The project has lasted for two years from 2018 to 2020, launching a curriculum reform in multiple English major subjects and designing various classroom activities for students. The university denoted its project adopted a bilingual and bi-cultural model, where students were expected to incorporate cultural knowledge in their alternate English and Chinese language practices. The aim of the project, according to the organizers, is to enhance students' biliteracy and intercultural competence in the EFL classes. The two English major students voluntarily participated in the project, reflecting their different identities and investment under the impact of specific beliefs, values and ideologies.

The following article consists of five sections. In the first and second section, the author will briefly introduce the national and institutional policies underpinning the project, and review the previous theories and studies on language learners' identity and investment. The third section will give attention to the narratives of the construction process of two learners' identities and investment. The fourth section will analyse their identities and investment in Darvin and Norton's model. In the last part, the author will discuss the conclusion and bring some implications to the future bilingual education in China.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Bilingual Higher Education Reform Project

Due to the intensified globalisation and the predominant role of English in the world, China has become one of the English as Foreign Language (EFL) countries that widely promote bilingual education in tertiary institutions (Tong & Shi, 2011; Wang & Curdt-Christiansen, 2019). Since 2001, the Chinese Ministry of Education (CMoE) has promulgated a series of guideline documents on the Chinese-English bilingual instruction to promote the internationalisation of higher education in China (CMoE, 2001; CMoE, 2004; CMoE, 2007). Researchers and policy stakeholders have numerously discussed the purposes of this form of language provision and its expected result, believing that it can provide high proficiency in English to quality education and personal development (Hu, 2008).

However, the bilingual education was not left uncontroversial. Some scholars implied the scarcity of intercultural interactions in the teaching and learning. As Tong and Shi (2011) suggested, "the issue of bilingual teaching in China has little to do with cultural identity, instead, it is about language." (p.167) A common practice of bilingual pedagogy in mainstream classrooms is that one language is used for instructions to teach the content, while the other language is only served for necessary explanation of difficult concepts and terminologies. Since the learners in classroom all speak the majority language (i.e. Chinese), the primary goal of the maintenance bilingual inside classrooms is facilitating the learning of an international language, rather than preserving cultural pluralism (Feng, 2009; Hu, 2008). In this case, Chinese modern bilingual education is merely regarded as an additive education within a monolingual and mono-cultural population. This under criticised model seemed to deviate the original purpose of bilingual education, that it should focus not only on acquiring additional languages, but also on "helping students to become global and responsible citizens as they learn to function across cultures and worlds" (García, 2009, p. 6).

Furthermore, national policies and political situations also called for a reform in the bilingual educational field. In 2013, the Chinese government proposed the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI), and later officially updated the initiative into the constitution of China in 2017. It is a global development strategy and long-term investment programme involving nearly 70 countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, which aimed to boost the regional economy and construct an innovative pattern of capital, technology and talent pool, enhancing mutual understanding and trust of member nations through cultural exchange and integration (*Uniview*, 2018). The innovative purpose of economic policies further led to the adjustment in language educational policies, which began to emphasise the need of "international talents" training and additional cross-cultural courses in higher education (CMoE, 2016). One of the start points was the English major in university, which has been to required to incorporate more intercultural contents in curriculum.

In response to the controversy and national policies above, many universities and regional educational authorities started to develop their own reform project in the bilingual higher education (Wang, 2015; Shi, 2016). The classroom under analysis in this article was situated in the political background above, which was a part of the institutional higher education reform project in a northern province.

2.2 Identity Framework and Investment Model

The notion of identity has been applied to many academic fields related to social science and human learning. Researchers have described identity as a process where learning creates learners' personal history within a set of relationships, which are constantly formed between persons, activities and the world (Wenger, 1998). According to Norton (2017), in the field of foreign language learning, learners' identity plays a central role in the language learning progress, as learners with more powerful identities in social interactions can claim greater legitimacy as speakers. Identity is also a highly intricate concept that does not comply with a single theoretical approach, thereby can be analysed in various theoretical frameworks (Varghese, Morgan, Johnston & Johnson, 2005).

In line with the key features of different theoretical frameworks, Fisher, Evans, Forbes, Gayton and Liu (2018) have generalised three perspectives on identity theory: the psychosocial, sociocultural and poststructural perspectives. Erikson (1968) was the pioneer researcher who proposed identity theory from psychosocial perspective, categorising identities into multiple developmental dimensions, including individual and social-contextual dimensions. In terms of the individual identity, it was regarded as a long-term process that can develop through many psychological stages, allowing individuals to consciously reflect on themselves and regulate their behaviour (Leary & Tangney, 2003). The social dimensional identity, on the other hand, concerns the external factors that can influence the way individuals shape their choices and position themselves in a particular historical or cultural time period, such as parents and society (Oyserman & James, 2011). Despite the multiple dimensions of identity in Erikson's framework, he accentuated the existence of one core identity, which is integrated by all other identities, coherently developing across time and connecting individuals' present experience with past and future.

Although the sociocultural and psychosocial perspective shares the similar concern in both individual and social factors that can influence identity construction, the former approach has shifted in its emphasis from individual to the impact of historical, cultural and social contexts. Sociocultural theorists believe that individual identity is constituted by social environment rather than self-developed, thereby being "mediated, relational and situated" (Fisher et al., 2018, p. 4). In such a theory, identity is necessarily to be framed and discussed in inseparable social contexts and interactions, in which individuals' identity formation process entails their participation in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Sociocultural approach also challenges the unified "core identity" of psycholsocial perspective, defining identities are multiple, provisional and dependently varied in diverse environments (Toohey & Norton, 2010.)

As the most widely accepted theoretical framework in recent identity studies (Norton & Morgan, 2013), poststructural approach can be regarded as an extension of the two former perspectives. Norton and Toohey (2011) have reviewed three main perspectives of poststructuralism, concerning the theories of "language", "subjectivity" and "positioning". The language theory specifies the inextricable relationship between language and language users' identity. Since interlocutors seldom share the even rights to speak, language usage can be regarded as a social and political practice involving power distribution and circulation, and influences learners' access to ascribed group identities. It is usually related to Bourdieu's theory (1977), which described language as a "symbolic asset which can receive different values depending on the market on which it is offered" (p. 651). In terms of the subjectivity theory, it defines individual (i.e. subject) as uncertain, contradictory and dynamic, which refutes the rather logical developmental process of pyscholsocial theory. Focusing on the subjectivity of the foreign language learner, this theory indicates the transformative potential of individual agency. Resonating with the sociocultural perspective, the positioning theory similarly suggests identities or positions are often contingent on social structures or ascribed by others. However, positioning theory is paradoxical, as it also explores the possibility that identities can be negotiated by agents and reflect their expected positions (Davies & Harré, 1990). In short, the poststructural perspective primarily focuses on the learners' agency for self-transformation and the issue of power, indicating that identity is multiple, dynamic and both "context-dependent and context-producing" (Norton & Toohey, 2011, p. 420), rather than merely being locked in particular contexts.

In the foreign language learning field, "investment" is another concept closely related to learner's identity. In Norton's early research (1995), investment has been taken to compare with the psychological concept "motivation". While the notion of motivation generally presupposes a "unitary, fixed and ahistorical" expectation of learning outcomes (Norton, 1995, p. 17), investment attempts to capture the constantly changing identities and multiple desires of learners in different time and spaces, concerning the actual effort expended on their goals and practices. Therefore, the learners' motivation and investment can be inconsistent, a highly motivated learner may not be invested in the classroom language practices that are racist, sexist, or homophobic (Norton & Toohey, 2001). Recent studies attempted to examine the investment of learners in a poststructural lens, associating this

notion with other elements related to power attribution, such as ideologies and capital (Kramsch, 2013).

In response to the current interest in poststructural theory, Darvin and Norton (2015) proposed a new model of investment (Figure 1). This innovative model denotes that the investment of language learners occurs in the intersection of three key constructs: "Ideology", "Capital" and "Identity". Ideology refers to a normative set of ideas constructed by the symbolic or world-making power that can "impose and inculcate principles of construction of reality" (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 13). The ideology construct in investment model contains a larger domain beyond mere language, involving norms that endow learners with varied positions such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. In respect to the notion of capital, Bourdieu (1986) has defined it as power-related resources that extend from material to social and cultural, such as income, language knowledge and social network. Darvin and Norton (2015) argued that it is significant to examine the transformation and fluidity of capital in investment studies, because these capitals are the perceivable asset that individuals invest on and expect to regain in language learning. In addition, the value of these capitals is partially dependent on the dominant ideology, that varies in different ideological structures. The identity construct, which aligns with its poststructual definition, also asserts the multiple and dynamic nature, and further clarifies that identity is a struggle of "competing ideologies and imagined identities" (Darvin & Norton, 2015, p. 45): Although students are positioned according to different ideologies and varying levels of capital, they are able to invest on what they desire, namely the "imagined identity" (Norton, 2013). These three factors are mutually supported in the poststructural model, providing the opportunity for researchers and education agents to discuss the factors that can enhance or restrain learners' investment in the conjoint section.

Figure 1. Darvin and Norton's Model of Investment (2015)

2.3 Research on Chinese EFL Students' Identities and Investment

Previous studies on identity and investment have identified various challenges and learning characteristics of Chinese students, due to the large population of Chinese EFL learning communities. For example, Gao (2008) and McKay and Wong (1996) found that Chinese students' agency to learn English and willingness to classroom engagement would fluctuate with their contextual conditions of learning. Gu (2016) pointed out that English accents were significant factors in adjusting Chinese students' investment and identities, since students were able to selectively represent their learner identities as well as develop more opportunities to practise English by changing their accents. Gu (2006) and Teng (2019) also proposed from their study results that the factors affecting students' investments could be varied, ranging from gender, religious beliefs to the origins (urban or non-urban areas) of students. However, most of the studies above were situated in Anglophone countries (e.g. the UK and the US) or other contexts English dominant contexts such as English medium instruction universities in Hong Kong. Little attention was paid to the identity and investment changes of Chinese mainland students in their local contexts where opportunities to use English are limited, thus leaving a research gap awaited addressing. Since mainland China has presented a distinct second language learning environment, it is crucial to investigate how these students gain opportunities to learn and practise English in their local communities, and what challenges they confront in their efforts to learn the language.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Questions

This study investigates the trajectory of identity constructions and accompanied investment changes of two EFL major undergraduate students-"Li" and "Lu" (pseudonym)-and how these changes affected their foreign language development and EFL communication. Two research questions are proposed as follows:

1. How do Li and Lu's identities change across times and spaces in the trajectory of EFL learning?

2. What factors affect their investment on bilingual ability acquirement inside and outside of their classroom?

3.2 Research Design

As a typical qualitative approach examining the various stories in which "individuals' experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted" in stories (Clandinin, 2013, p.18), narrative inquiry has been chosen in this study to explore the two students' perceptions and efforts in EFL learning. According to Wortham (2001), individual narratives can be effective methods to reveal the identities of storytellers, because people are able to represent themselves in recognisable story lines. Therefore, in this study, narrative inquiry may help interpret the various, subtle and implicit expressions of EFL learners' identities and motives hidden behind their stories.

The present study followed Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimension framework of narrative inquiry to explore their identity development and investment changes. The three-dimension framework respectively paid attention to the elements of "continuity", "situation" and "interaction". The continuity element traced individuals' stories from temporal perspective, for example, the past and present perceptions and practices of participants' EFL learning and their future expectations; the situation dimension emphasised the spaces changes of participants, especially their sociocultural environments. The last dimension, interaction, focused on the personal and social elements that internally and externally contribute to the participants' identities and investment. These three elements considered the force of both sociocultural factors and individual agencies, thereby investigating the fluid, multiple, and dynamic essence of identities and investment from poststructural perspective.

3.3 Participants Recruitment

The two participants were directly recruited from the bilingual higher education reform project and voluntarily participated in the current study. Both the participants have represented unique, comparable bilingual ability characteristics and EFL learning processes that worth exploration. Since the author was one of the teaching assistants in this project, the permission of recruiting participants has been received from the university before data collection. The author sent invitations to these two students in her class, then introduced them the purpose and procedures of the study. They have been fully informed with the requirements and potential risks of taking part into this study. After the initial contacts, a participant information sheet and consent form were sent to Li and Lu, so that they could acknowledge the confidential principles and their right to withdraw from this research for any or no reason and at any time.

3.4 Data Collection

Although the data were collected using semi-structured interviews as the primary technique, data triangulation was also achieved through the examination of participants' learning diaries. 4 rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participants, in order to collect Li and Lu's previous EFL learning histories and personal experiences in bilingual classroom, their emotions, progress and future expectations and strategies on bilingual ability enhancement. Participants were required to answer and elaborate on the questions related to the topics above, as well as consider what factors were significant in their intercultural and linguistics practices. Each interview was arranged and audio-recorded via online session platform and lasted for 1.5 to 2 hours. During the interviews, participants were free to use their first language (i.e. mandarin), so that they can express their genuine perceptions. They were both consented to the use of their data in this article. Aside from these interviews, participants were also invited to write a 400-word learning diaries to reflect on their positions in the bilingual learning history and their sociocultural relations with other communities.

3.5 Data Analysis

After several rounds of semi-structured interviews, interview and diary data were transcribed and translated into English for further processing. Data analysis was conducted in an ongoing, recursive and iterative process, which consisted of following stages. First, the author rechecked the accuracy of transcriptions and translations, familiarising the data and developing the initial coding ideas (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With the guidance of Darvin and Norton's investment model, the coding procedure mainly examined the "introspective account of their experiences" (Ricento, 2005, p. 904), which focused on participants' interview and diary responses related to their identity transformation, varied perceived or unperceived capitals and ideologies in the learning environment. After the initial coding, the codes were categorised to different themes and were repeatedly refined, as the new themes emerged with the new came-in data. In addition, the study also gain insight from participants' academic assessment to supplement the interviews and diaries study. Although these data were not collected for interpretation, they guaranteed the authenticity of the data above.

4. Findings

The findings of this article were driven from the qualitative data collected from interviews with two participants.

Participants' previous life stories and learning experience in the bilingual classroom were respectively represented as follows, which was considered suitable exemplars for case study. According to Duff (2014), the benefit of analysing individuals' experience with language in case studies is that it would "permit elaboration on the complexity and characteristics of that one case" (p. 238).

4.1 The Case of Lu

Lu was a 22-year-old male student from a rural village in western China. Due to the backward economic and educational conditions, he did not get in touch with English until he went to secondary school, yet he has developed a strong interest in learning English since he was a teenager. In his junior and senior high school, he kept being a top student in English class. After graduating from secondary school, he decided to continue on pursuing his interest and become an English major student. However, as soon as he left his hometown and entered university, he sensed a pressure from his peer students.

Extract 1

> Lu: ...Only after you went to university would you feel your English proficiency level is different from other's. In my senior high school, everybody just tried to memorise more vocabulary and finish more test papers, and we seldom thought about using English for communication. If we wanted to communicate in English, we just used a few words rather than sentences. This was my proficiency level. Because listening and reading tests only required us to catch the key words in the paragraph, I got good academic performance in written tests. But in university we speak English a lot, which made I feel very embarrassed [with my proficiency]. It's like I cannot express myself, and when I listen to others speaking, I can't catch up with the whole sentence but only a single word.

In the interview, Lu has viewed his foreign language proficiency as a necessary capital that allows him to obtain the identity of a legitimate language user. As Darvin and Norton (2015) explained, since the value of one's capital is shifting across time and space, a valuable capital in one place may be devalued in another. Accordingly, Lu's cultural capital (i.e. good academic performance in written tests) was devalued in university environment, whilst other capital, such as oral proficiency was more emphasised. Because of the shortage of certain cultural capital, he experienced a transformation of learner identity from a confident student to a passive, marginalised student, and this downward transformation further resulted in his low dispositions for participation in the classroom. As Lu mentioned, he defined himself as "a trivial learner" when he initially participated in the bilingual educational project.

Extract 2

> Lu: There were a lot of *"Dalao"* [straight-A students] in the project, I was here just for fun. I did not participate in too many activities. Compared with other people, I'm more *"Foxi"* [slack and casual].

Despite the passive attitude of Lu, the reform project invited him to engage in various intriguing activities, cultivating his cultural enthusiasm and investment in English language learning. For example, he participated in a classroom practice called *English Drama Editing and Acting*. This activity was designed by the project organiser, which require students to adapt a Chinese drama or movie plot into an English script and rehearse for it. Lu and his group members chose a famous Chinese movie, "*Wo Bushi Yaoshen (Dying to Survive)*". Lu played as the main character of this movie, and gained a sense of "resonance" in the rehearsal.

Extract 3

> After the performance, everybody said I did so great. Actually it seemed that all the group members were merely completing a task, except me. Maybe it's because I could find the resonance and the plot was very related to me. The most the relational thing was that he[the main character] is a *nobody,* and myself is a *nobody* too. The more commons I could find on the character, the more I was engaged.

Lu also mentioned his experience in an intercultural class when the professor attempted to give students a lecture about the aesthetic differences between western and eastern countries. After explaining the terms and concepts for students, the professor started to tell her own overseas life experience to help them better understand the lecture topic. Lu was deeply attracted by the professor's story and then actively participated in the group discussion later.

Extract 4

> Lu: When she[professor] was talking, I started to illustrate those vivid life pictures in my head and compared them to my own life. They were so true and appealing, and I couldn't help to imagine that I could have such a life style one day.

Lu positioned himself as "a successful actor" and "a positive respondent" in the above contexts. Although these two identities are developed in specific sites, they indicated that the primary concern in the process of negotiating Lu's identity and investment was the correlation between the target knowledge and his own experience and expectation. Lu lacked of language capital to strengthen his right to speak in the university community, yet he managed to establish a relevance between in-class activities and his self-positioning, which drove him to actively participate in English practices. The admiration of the professor's life style was not only his fervent desire, but also an "imagined identity" that he would invest for.

On the other hand, transcriptions revealed the ideological challenges that Lu has encountered. Although he had the agency to invest in English learning, the prevalent ideology of English as a foreign language in daily life has circumscribed his opportunities to speak English. Although English has been acknowledged as a lingua franca in the intercultural classroom (Ou, Gu, & Hult, 2020), it still remains a less used foreign language in the Chinese environment. One consequence of this tacit ideology implementation is that students often sense of "spatial separation" between in-classroom and outside classroom, which will lead to the idleness of learner's second language capital. For instance, Lu said he was confused about the orientation of English knowledge outside bilingual classrooms.

Extract 5

Lu: My [daily] life is one world, whereas the classroom is another world. When you are taking the lessons, professors will guide you from place to place, like a time and space travel. But as soon as the [school] bell rings, everything has gone. You go back to the real world again. In daily life, English is like a beautiful, empty vase. Indeed, it looks beautiful, but I don't know where I can use it.

4.2 The Case of Li

Li was a 21-year-old female student who grew up in a city in central China. She started to learn English in her primary school age, and decided to be an English major at the request of her parents. On the contrary to Lu, who was confused about the use of foreign language capital, Li was clearly aware of her perception of English.

Extract 6

Li: Now many people say English is not so important as it used to be, I don't think so. I think English is a kind of tool, which needs to be accumulated little by little. When it's accumulated to a certain level, you can use it to do some English-relevant works. For example, if you are a girl, you may want to go to Youtube to watch some make-up videos. It would be helpful if you understand some English. Once you understand what the Youtuber says, you can learn something through English.

Because Li grew up and learned English in a city where the economic and educational conditions were better than those in villages, the capital afforded in her language environment, including online social network and technology, was abundant, allowing her to more engage in the linguistic and cultural practices to realise her self-worth than Lu did. Li referred her language capital to a "tool" for obtaining other skills and knowledge, which proves that capital can be transformed into other valuable resources in the translocal contexts, such online community. It is noteworthy that such a convertibility of language resources was generated under the systemic control of "English as an International lingua franca" ideology. As a result of the large-scale globalisation, it regards English as an essential skill in the same way that numeracy and literacy are (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011).

Meanwhile, the way Li perceived her affordance also influenced her willingness and commitment to participate in this bilingual educational project.

Extract 7

Li: For now, one thing I really want to do is to learn something else through English. Because learning language itself is too popularised, everyone can do it. An English major should know something beyond language itself, for example, the culture that are out of reach in your daily life.

Extract 8

Li: I love the *Selective Reading* course.....I read a lot of Chinese and American newspaper in the class. Once in the class we were asked to compare two different reports on the same event happened in [Chinese village name]. The English [report] was very authentic, and you could sense that he[reporter] really spent lots of effort on investigation. In contrast, the Chinese report was shallow. Nowadays most Chinese writers are just pouring *"Kuaican Hua (fast food words/empty talk)"* in their articles. Looking from other perspectives can help you to understand things holistically. You should be objective and critical in thinking, if you are always immersed in the domestic circle, you cannot find both weaknesses and strengths.

Li's appreciation to international culture and expectation of critical thinking ability constructed her identity as an interculturalist and independent thinker. Her imagined identity is a language user who learn language for a broader purpose, which aligned with the educational aims of this bilingual project and national policy: "international talents training" and "enhancing students' biliteracy". This consistency has developed her within a strong sense of agency to participate in cross-cultural practices. In addition, she also articulated her dissatisfaction of the learning environment which failed to provide the capital of critical literacy she needed, thus prompting a desire to attain greater knowledge valued in the classroom contexts.

On the other hand, the prevailing English speaking norms in China positioned Li as a passive speaker in public activities. In interviews, Li expressed her preference for "native speakers' pronunciation" and her inferiority feelings of the Chinese accent. The equivalence between "excellent English" and "speaking like natives" implied a hegemonic ideology of native speakers in EFL education (Li, 2009; Jenkins, 2000), which defined native English was superior and dampened the participant's desire in investing in L2 practices.

Extract 9

> Li: I did not participate too many public activities, like speech competitions and debates. You should have a look at those students from coastal cities, their English pronunciation is excellent. They can speak like natives, perfectly without any accents.

5. Discussion

5.1 A Variety of Ideologies in Bilingual Classroom

The findings of data analysis reveal the existence of multiple ideologies in this bilingual higher education project. For example, in Lu's stories, he mentioned the scarcity of opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. In such a native language (i.e. Chinese) dominant EFL community, the aim of promoting intercultural communication of immersive bilingual education programmes seemed to be unachievable, as critiqued in previous studies (Feng, 2009). On the other hand, Li's narratives indicate the existence of a variety of intricate ideologies: while evaluating the status of English in daily use, she was influenced by the wider ideology of "English as lingua franca" and regarded English as a global communicative tool and an asset can be employed for career promotion, thus increasing her motivation of investing on second language acquisition. In addition, her pursuit of critical thinking ability inside bilingual classroom also resonate with the institutional ideology. However, her endeavour to speak English in public was restricted by the native-speakerism ideology (Li, 2009), which endorses the imbalanced power between native and non-speakers of English. These findings prove that ideologies on different levels (e.g. global and institutional levels) can interdependently co-exist in the same context, thereby mediating students' willingness to participate in language and cultural practices.

5.2 Communicative English Proficiency and Criticality as Capital

The narratives of participants show that Lu and Li had different perceptions of capitals and employed them in EFL learning differently. In terms of Lu, he has experienced a shift in the value of his cultural capitals–academic performance in written tests and English communicative skills–and started to realign these capitals to the rules of university classroom community. The knowledge of "foreign cultures", which Lu desired to learn from his teachers, can also be regarded as a cultural capital which encouraged him to invest on bilingual practices. However, his lack of communicative competence seemed to undermine his attempts to take part into classroom activities. In addition, the opportunities of using English as a capital outside classroom contexts were also restricted due to the systemic control from ideologies. As for Li, her stories show that she was able to assess the benefits of different capitals and consciously resist dominant ideologies in her sociocultural environments. For example, while explaining her choices of learning English, she mentioned her disagreement with "many people" who devalued English. She also perceived critical thinking ability as a valuable capital and showed her discontent to the prevailing ideology that underplays the significance of this ability. Li and Lu's cases both prove that participants' investment in language learning and practices can not only be impacted by their possessed capitals, but also be driven by their assessment of different values of capitals (Sung, 2020).

5.3 Imagined Identities and Identities of Practice

The multiple, dynamic and fluid nature of identity is also revealed in this study, especially in tracing Lu's case. Some of his identities were constantly emergent in the past and present study histories, which appeared to be contradictory: for example, he can simultaneously positioned himself as a passive learner and a positive respondent in the classroom. His identities changes were situated in specific learning environments, dependent on the interactions with other community members and his instructors' teaching practices. Additionally, he also shows that he has the agency to achieve a self-transformation of identities by engaging actively in drama acting

and intercultural classrooms. The identity of "a positive respondent" was an identity constructed in the classroom community of practice (Wenger, 1998; Norton, 2007), yet it was strongly related to Lu' imagined identity who "lives abroad". Similar to Lu's case, Li also represented her imagined identity in relation to her expectations of future, as she wished to establish an identity as a critical student proficient in cultural knowledges. However, her identity of practice as a passive public speaker could discourage her sustained investment in university activities, which would in turn position herself as an illegitimate speaker of the target language (Pavlenko, 2000).

6. Conclusion

The case study represented a praxis of poststructural identity theory and investment model. Lu and Li's experience verified that identity is multiple, contradict and fluid. It can be both negative and used for shaping positive imagined identity at the same time. While Lu's case indicated that the contradiction in identity construction is operated in the changing time and spaces, Li's case demonstrated that it is also partially subject to the impact of different ideologies co-existed within the same context. Meanwhile, the subjectivity of learners entitles them the potential to renegotiate their identity and investment. The significant role of educational environments, including institutional policy, teachers and the in-classroom resources, was also revealed in the article, as they can likewise influence students' willingness to invest on their bilingual ability.

On the other hand, the cases of two participants reflected the drawbacks of the reform project to some extent. Although it did provide some opportunities for students to strengthen their bilingualism and intercultural competence, it failed to get rid of the shackles of mainstream ideology in EFL field, thus restricting their use of English inside and outside the classroom. Universities may seek ways to raise students' awareness of the varied opportunities to increase their access to English use and learning, for example, organising more English-mediated social activities (Sung, 2020). Furthermore, university teachers and institutional policymakers may consider a pedagogical transformation in EFL classrooms, which diverges from native speaker based norms to the assimilation for local specific needs (Li, 2009).

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