

# 认知语言学视阈下的英语词汇教学探索<sup>①</sup>

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**摘要:**在认知语言学相关理论指导下进行英语词汇教学,需重视基本层次范畴词汇,然后以其为原型建立范畴,同时解读其多个意义之间的隐喻、转喻延伸机制。最后,在发展英汉两种语言同质性的同时,还需克服其异质性。

关键词:认知语言学,词汇教学,基本层次范畴

**Abstract:** To teach English vocabulary under the guidance of cognitive linguistics, the basic category terms should be first identified. Then, centered on these terms, a prototype category is established and meanwhile the metaphorical and metonymic mechanism in their semantic extension is analyzed. In the end, efforts are made to overcome the differences between Chinese and English while the similarities between them are made best use of.

**Keywords:** Cognitive linguistics, Vocabulary teaching, The basic level category

## 1. 引言

对于任何一种语言学习而言,词汇尤为重要。词汇不仅是言语产生的动力(Levelt, 1989),也是听力理解的关键(Marselen-Wilson, et al., 1994)。然而,对于中国英语学习者而言,英语词汇之苦难于上青天。一则因为英语词汇数量庞大,二则英语词汇中一词多义现象、习语和动词短语甚多。英语学习者把大量时间花费在词汇上,或大量阅读日积月累,或集中时间和精力反复背诵词典或各类词汇书籍以求快速突破。然而,大量阅读耗时且低效,往往前记后忘;集中学习单词可在短时间内记忆大量单词,看似高效,但记得快忘得也快,也不可取。因此,探索一种新的词汇学习和教学模式显得十分迫切。认知语言学的兴起给语言教学提供了新思路。有鉴于此,本文拟通过论述原型范畴、基本层次范畴、隐喻、转喻以及

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概念化等认知语言学理论,来探讨认知语言学在英语词汇教学中所起的作用,同时给出具体举措。

## 2. 语言认知观

认知语言学作为一种新的语言学范式,自20世纪80年代以来蓬勃发展,一时呈现百家争鸣局面:有的侧重隐喻研究,有的专注概念整合,有的提出识解理论,有的主张构式语法探索。总之,认知学者们在语言研究中虽使用不同理论术语,侧重不同要点,采用不同视角,但关于语言、认知和世界之间的关系却持有普遍认同的观点,这些观点使得认知语言学研究具有一贯性和合理性。Geiger & Rudzka-Ostyn(1993:1)将这些观点总结如下:

(1)作为人的认知域之一,语言和其他认知域密切相关,同时反映着心理、文化、社会、生态和别的因素之间的相互作用。

(2)语言结构依赖于、同时也影响着概念化(conceptualization),而概念化受人们对自身、外部世界的体验以及和外部世界关系的影响。

(3)语言单位受范畴化的制约,范畴化产生出基于原型的网络系统。这一系统中的大部分成员和隐喻、转喻有关。

(4)一个语言单位的意义是和其有着规约联系的概念结构,其本质是意象的(imagistic),和已知环境或事物的特定心理识解(mental construal)有关。

作为基本的语言单位,词汇也是基本的语义单位和概念单位,和认知主体的认知体验有着密切的关系。因此,认知语言学相关理论对词汇教学有一定的启发作用。总体而言,英语词汇教学主要涉及以下认知语言学理论。

### 2.1 原型范畴和基本层次范畴

传统范畴观认为,范畴都是离散范畴,每个范畴都有各自的“界定特征”,符合某些“界定特征”的就成为某一范畴成员,反之则不然。“界定特征”为范畴所有成员共有,范畴内部各成员地位均等,范畴边界清晰。认知语言学原型范畴理论则认为,范畴不能靠界定特征来划分,而应围绕原型组建。原型是人们对世界进行范畴化的认知参照点,所有概念的建立都以原型为中心。范畴由认知主体建立,大都具有主观色彩。范畴与范畴之间的边界模糊,事物只要存在某些方面的相似性(家族相似性),就可以归为同一范畴。一个范畴内部各成员地位也不平等,有些是原型成员,有些为非原型成员。例如,“麻雀”“燕子”是鸟的原型成员,而“鸵鸟”“企鹅”则是非原型成员。相对非原型成员而言,原型成员与其他成员享有更多共性,具有最大的区分性和最多的信息量,也是人们最熟悉、最常见的事物。

认知语言学原型范畴认为,世界给人们提供了具有一定结构的信息,具有突显特征的基本物体呈现为自然的基本层次范畴,这些基本层次范畴带有一定抽象程度,通过最小的认知努力可表现出最大的信息。基本层次范畴之上是更为抽象和综合的上位范畴,其下是更为详细具体的下位范畴。基本层次范畴、上位范畴和下位范畴共同组成了一个等级结构体,其中来源于基本物体的基本层次范畴尤其重要,“它们代表着自然在自身的节点被切分的感知方式”(Mac Cormac,1985:96)。

## 2.2 隐喻和转喻

认知语言学认为,隐喻是人类认知和思维的一种方式,其实质是“用一类事物理解和体验另一类事物,是源域到目标域之间的映射”(Lakoff & Johnson,1980)。通过跨域联系,源域将其相关概念要素映射到目标域上,目标域因映射而突显。此种认知能力使得人类认知内容得以延伸,认知范围得到扩大。Lakoff & Johnson(同上)根据始源域不同,把隐喻分为三类——方位隐喻、本体隐喻和结构隐喻,并指出任何隐喻均基于体验去理解和表征。与隐喻相同,转喻也是基于人们的经验来认知事物的一种认知和思维方式,其本质是概念性的。隐喻的核心概念是相似,而转喻的核心概念是“邻近”(contiguity)。隐喻和转喻都是概念形成和语义延伸的手段。两者的区别,简单地说,隐喻是用一个概念来说明另一个相似的概念,源域概念具体;转喻是用一个概念来指代另一个相关的概念,源域概念显著。

## 2.3 概念化

认知语言学将意义看作概念,认为认知是联系语言和现实世界的桥梁,意义形成的过程就是概念化的过程。语言表达不直接体现现实,而是现实在人思维中概念化的结果。在认识、了解世界的活动中,“身体”是人类感知世界的主要器官,同时也是人们了解世界,获取知识的源泉。语言产生于人类身体与外界事物的相互作用,是主客观互动的结果。人类具有相同的生理结构,所生活的物质世界也大抵相同,因此具备相同的感知、认识能力,能够获得相同的体验感受和相同的概念结构,这些构成不同语言同质的基础,也是各民族能够相互理解的前提。杨永林(2004:19)指出,“外部世界有其客观性的一面,人类大脑内部机能有其理性化的一面,两者结合起来使得我们对世界万物有一种同一的认识。”但是,“人是有自由意志和主观能动性的,正是人的自由意志、人的主观能动性使人在进行语言活动时表现出不同的心理状态;同时,意识还会在当时不同的心理状态下有不同的反应,因为大脑是涉身的大脑”(徐盛桓,2014:4)。“人的种种行为是在一定条件下基于理性的、可理解的动因,它们并非预先就被决定好了的”(甘绍平,2013:89)。就意义构建而言,人的自由意志和主观能动性也发挥着一定作用,“人们表现出的意愿、偏好、决断等心智活动,并不必然做出唯一的选择”(徐盛桓,2014:4)。因此,不同民族对同一事物的感知、理解方式也存在着差异,具有独特的观察视角和认知习惯,这种视角和习惯成为概念构建倾向固化下来,造成语言的异质及语言表达的差异。

# 3. 认知语言学视阈下的英语词汇教学

有研究表明,对于外语学习者而言,5000 单词是一个转折点,词汇量低于 5000 的外语阅读者阅读正确率远远低于词汇量高于 5000 的阅读者。外语学习者如果想比较顺利地阅读中等难度的文章,10000 单词是最基本的要求。基于此,我们首先从各类英文书籍、杂志和报纸上搜集了 10000 左右的常用英语单词,建立一个小型语料库,然后确定基本层次范畴词汇。在此基础上建立基本层次范畴词汇原型范畴,同时阐释基本范畴词汇多个意义之间的隐喻、转喻延伸机制。此外,一方面甄选基本范畴词汇相关习语或动词短语,另一方面探讨

汉语对等词在英语基本层次范畴词汇意义解读中的运用。

### 3.1 基本层次范畴词汇确立

认知语言学原型范畴理论认为,基本层次范畴事物与人们生活密切相关,人们最容易感知,最为熟悉。指示此类事物的词汇为基本层次范畴词汇,它们多是词形简单、音节较少的不可分析语词。这类词的意义一般不通过隐喻从其他认知域借入(Berlin, et al., 1973),且大都为本义。因此,基本层次范畴词汇在英语原文词典中地位十分重要,现今出版的英文词典在词条释义中使用的大多是基本层次范畴词汇。另外,这类词义项丰富,与其他词语固定搭配较多,在日常语言交流和书面表达中担负了重要作用。

由此,基本层次范畴词汇成为学习者学习和使用英语的重点,也是英语词汇教学的基础。基本层次范畴词汇定位准确,相关学习和教学才可相继。基本层次范畴是认知上优选的范畴,最引人注目且最适合人的认知需要,容易识别。但是,为使基本层次范畴词汇甄选更为科学合理,仍需遵循一定的标准。在 Lakoff(1987:267)对基本层次范畴论述的基础上,我们设定了以下三个标准:

- (1)心理意象:对于基本层次范畴事物,人们能够形成丰富的心理意象。
- (2)“完形”感知:基本层次范畴的各个成员有共同的整体形状,便于“完形”感知。
- (3)动作联系:基本层次范畴跟人的特定动作相联系,如“门”和开、关联系,“书”和读联系。

基于以上3个标准,我们确定了500多个基本层次范畴词汇,并将其分为以下几类:人体部位词,如 head、eye、face、lip、tongue、neck、arm、leg、body、foot 等;自然事物词,如 sun、lake、moon、fur、grass、seed、flower 等;人造物词,如 mirror、glass、bread、desk、board 等;基本活动类词,如 move、come、go、pull、draw、bear、die、note、take 等;基本形态词,如 light、heavy、fast、loose、long、short、deep、shallow、middle、tiny 等;空间关系类词,如 on、in、at、behind、post 等。

### 3.2 基本层次范畴词汇原型范畴建立

基本层次范畴词汇原型范畴指的是以基本层次范畴词汇为原型的词汇范畴。认知语言学的哲学基础是体验现实主义,该理论认为人类绝大多数基础概念及通过这些概念进行的推理都具有身体体验性。“一个概念结构之所以有意义是因为它是体验的,来源于我们的前概念结构并与之紧密联系”(Lakoff, 1987:267)。前概念结构是概念结构的基础,是理解概念结构的前提。Lakoff(同上)区分了两种前概念结构:基本层次范畴和意象图式。这两种前概念结构对认知主体具有直接意义,而其他或者更为抽象的概念结构则具有间接意义。一般而言,其他概念结构以两种方式产生于基本层次范畴或意象图式:从基本域到抽象域的隐喻投射;从基本层次范畴到上位或下位范畴的投射。在以基本层次范畴词汇为原型的词汇范畴构建中,这两种投射起着重要作用。除此之外,转喻投射也起一定作用。

首先,通过基本层次范畴到上位或下位范畴的投射,可以建立某些基本层次范畴词汇原型范畴,如以 house 为居住物原型建立一个房屋范畴,并对之进行如下解说:house(房屋)是人们生活的主要场所,古时人们日出而作于外,日落而息于屋(house)。除 household(家庭

住房)外,人们生病要住医院(hospital),出外要住旅店(hostel)。房子的主要功能是供人居住,有男主人(host)和女主人(hostess)。

如上所示,之所以把 house 与 hospital、hostel 归为同一范畴,是因为医院和旅店是房子的下位范畴。另外,基于家族相似性,将此类词汇归为同一范畴的理据有三:拼写相近、发音相似、意义相关。

另外,在基本层次范畴词汇为原型的范畴建立中,隐喻也起着重要作用,如基于水流动(flow)的特性,我们将相关流动事物归为同一范畴,同时基于拼写、语义和发音相近或相关等家族相似性建立以 flow(流动)为原型的词汇范畴,并对其解读如下:

gas(气流)、water(水流)都是 flow(流),fly(飞动)、flow(流动)都是 flew(fly 和 flow 的过去式)(动),aviation(航空)、navigation(航海)都是 AV(小船的形状)舟。说到 flow(流动),我们首先想到的是溪水与河流。在重力作用下,小溪或小河平稳流畅地向前 flow(奔流)。华灯升起,车辆汇成 traffic flow(车流),夜幕下的城市 flowing light and color(流光溢彩)。此情此景让人意识 flow(奔流)。fluid(流体)不只是 liquid(液体),还包括风、光、火、气味甚至声音,如风中 fly(flew)(飘飞)的 flag(红旗),flicker(摇曳)的灯光,flare(燃烧)的 flame(火焰),还有各种食物的 flavor(风味)也随风 inflow(进入)我们的鼻孔。另外,悠扬的 flute(笛声)和沁人心脾的 flower(花)fragrance(香)组成了美好的夜景——暗香 fluctuate(浮动)月黄昏。有时老外那 fluent(流利的)英语让我们 confused(糊涂)。还有,人们为了 refuge(避难)有时要 flee(流亡)他乡。

同样,根据转喻相邻机理,也可建立以基本层次范畴词汇为原型的词汇范畴,如 star(星星)具有“零星散布、发光”等特征,古时候人们将其作为“夜行的方向指导或占卜吉凶的参照物”。因此,其变体“spar”“sper”“scar”“str”也含有“闪烁”“稀少”“散布”“希望”等义。基于此种相关,我们构建以 star 为原型的词汇范畴并对其解读如下:

曹操仰望夜空,发出“star(星汉)spark(灿烂),若出其里”的感慨。无月的夜晚,点点 stars(繁星),如同颗颗珍珠 disperse(散布)天空,intersperse(点缀)夜幕。有月之夜,月朗 star(星)sparse(稀),人们常用 scarce(寥若晨星)形容事物之少。古人靠 astrology(占卜星象)来预测凶吉,如果一颗 star(星)dis(不在星位),astrologer(占星师)就认为 disaster(灾难)即将来临。当 des(没有)sper(希望)时,人们会感到 desperate(绝望)。

### 3.3 基本层次范畴词汇多义延伸机制探究

诸如人体部位、山川河流、日月星辰、花草树木等基本层次范畴词汇意义丰富,且大多为延伸意义。认知语言学认为,多义词各种意义之间的联系不是任意的,而是通过特定的语义引申机制发展而成。一般而言,这些引申机制包括隐喻和转喻。通过转喻延伸意义的一个经典英文词是 board:其原始意义为“一块锯薄的木板”,后通过转喻,由材料指称制成品“桌子”“板床”或“甲板”等。“桌子”又通过转喻指围桌而坐的一群人——“董事会”;“板床”通过转喻指床的功能——“住宿”;而“甲板”则由部分转指整体事物——“船”。

在一词多义延伸中,隐喻也起着重要作用。例如,neck 除具有“颈、脖子”之义外,还有“衣领、领子”“动物的颈”“瓶、壶等的颈”“物体中间颈状部位”“地峡、海峡”“变细、变狭窄”等意义。可以看出,除了“衣领、领子”是通过脖子和衣领位置相邻转喻延伸而来外,其他几个

意义均是认知主体基于人体颈部较细这一特征,建立的人体域到动物域、人造事物域和地理事物域的投射,即用人们熟悉的人体部位来描述具有类似特征的其他事物。这一隐喻延伸过程遵循“近取诸身,远取诸物”原则,即“人→动物→人造物→自然物”。

在认识新事物的过程中,语言范畴围绕原型义项向外扩展,发展出更多突出具体属性的意义。章宜华(2005:13—18)指出,在词典微观结构层面上,以隐喻、转喻、原型范畴为理论基础,可清楚地梳理多义词义项形成的内在机制及其分布的规律,有利于词典使用者较系统地习得语言。然而,人同此心,心同此理,各民族在与世界互动中会获得相同认知体验,进而产生相同的隐喻、转喻感悟,对多义词的词义延伸现象可以见一知百。因此,我们在阐释基本层次范畴词汇各义项时,不做过多的隐喻、转喻延伸解读,而是采用以原创短文串联其各个意义的方式,同时兼顾相关习语或动词短语。这样既激发了学习者的学习兴趣和热情,也在一定程度上解决了一词多义、习语和短语动词等词汇学习的瓶颈问题。下面以英语单词 light 为例做具体说明:

白天不懂夜的黑:白天之所以不 see(懂)夜的黑是因为 bright(白)day(天)有 light(光)而 night(夜晚)no(没有)light(光线)。无论是 sunlight(阳光)、moonlight(月光)还是 lamp-light(灯光),照在身上都 light(轻轻的),没有 weight(重量)。我们现在都住在 light(明亮的)屋子里,有水有 light(电/光),但我总是很怀念小时候没有 light bulb(电灯泡)的日子。那时候一到 night(晚上),我就 strike a light(擦着火柴),light(点上)candle(蜡烛)或 kerosene(煤油)light(灯),by(在)dim(昏暗的)light(光线)下学习,记得有一次不小心把窗帘给 set light to(点着)了,差点酿成火灾。Night(晚上)出门,村里没有 streetlight(街灯),我就拿着 flashlight(手电筒)light(照)路。记得有天 night(夜里)和小伙伴在街上玩耍时把家里的钥匙弄丢了,大家帮我一直找到天 light(亮),才 see the light(明白)钥匙就在我脖子上挂着呢。我说的这些还不 come to light(被人所知),你要 keep them in the dark(保密)啊。关于 light 的用法我想我已经 throw/shed light on(解释得很清楚)了,还有什么问题吗?——想知道我是什么样的人?我呢,不是很 bright(聪明),却总喜欢 enlighten(教导)别人。如果你 bright(聪明)的话应该猜到了我的职业。另外,闲暇时间我喜欢 light reading(读些闲书),读到 highlight(精彩的地方)就 light up(有喜色、露出笑容),感到无比 delightful(高兴)。还有,我是 light sleeper(睡眠很浅的人),早晨起床有时感到 light in the head(头重脚轻)。最后,我是 light drinker(酒量一般的人),喜欢听 light music(轻音乐),常穿 light-colored(浅颜色的)衣服,有时在 light wind(轻风)和 light rain(细雨)中散步,讲话也总是 light voice(柔声细语)的。总之,我是 lightweight(给人印象不深的),只是个 not the lights of the day(小人物),但我乐意帮助别人。还有,我比较 lighthearted(想得开),对挣钱多少 make light of(不是很在乎),做事有点 light-minded(轻率),往往 in the light of(按照)个人的 lights(标准)行事。我现在有一个 slight(很小的)愿望——下一个生日能够吃着 light cake(松软的蛋糕),在海边 light sand(松软的沙滩)上漫步,这虽然不是 light work(简单的事),但我想我已经看到 light at the end of the tunnel(希望之光)了。

## 4. 汉英同质性与异质性

在英语词汇教学中,我们一方面进行汉英同质性比照,以期产生语言学习正迁移效果,促进中国英语学习者的词汇深度学习;另一方面注意克服汉英异质性带来的语言学习负迁移影响。

### 4.1 汉英异质性的克服

汉语民族与英语民族的思维方式各有特点。就时空而言,英语民族侧重于时间,而汉语民族侧重于空间(王文斌,2013:163—173)。具体而言,英语民族注重事物的行为、动作或变化,认为宇宙万物的根本在于行为、动作,动是根本。这种认知倾向在语言中表现为大部分英语名词具有动作之义,在名动派生的数量上,名词派生于动词的居多。另外,英语词根大多表示动词的意义(金克木,1996)。相对而言,汉民族自古推崇格物致知,认为一切运动肇始于事物,事物是一切运动的主体,养成了“观物取象”的思维习惯。因此,在汉语中,表达事物的名词得到格外的重视(王文斌,同上)。据此,我们参照国人的认知习惯,在英语词汇教学中,通过某些基本层次范畴名词引出相关动词词根,如由 insect(昆虫)身上有切纹引出词根 sect(切、割);由 picture(图画)引出词根 dict(说、描述:古代没有文字之前人们通过绘画表情达意)。

### 4.2 汉英同质性的运用

英汉两种语言具有同质性,这意味着可以把汉语文字知识引入到英文词汇教学中,从而促进中国学习者对英语单词的理解和记忆。例如,英语基本层次范畴动词的习惯搭配繁多,这成为中国英语学习者的一个难点。国伟(2013)指出,英语的内在复杂性是导致中国英语学习者习得英语短语动词困难的最重要因素。对此,我们主要以英汉民族共同的生活体验来实现英汉语言的同质性,例如英语动词 take 的汉语对等词为“取”,和“趋”“趣”“去”“娶”等汉字语音相近,由此对 take 的相关短语解读如下:

对某事感兴趣我们就会“趋向”,因此英语有 take interest in(对……发生兴趣)或 take the stage(登台/趋台)的表达;对某物感兴趣我们也会去“抓取”,英语对应表达为 take hold of(握住)。除了通过手去获取事物外,我们也可以通过其他方式或工具来获取,如可以通过仪器量取温度或血压,英语就有 take temperature/blood pressure;通过照相机拍取事物的图像,英语就有 take a photo/picture;用笔记取信息,英语就有 take notes。take 也做 go(去),因此,“散步”的英语有 go for a walk 和 take a walk 两种表达。俗语说“取之不尽,用之不竭”,“取”的目的是“用”,因此 take 的常用表达 take one's time 或 it takes... time 就是利用时间。同样,对于英语短语 take the food/medicine/tea,汉语也有“用饭/药/茶”之说。“取”还涉及人们的选择,人们在取用事物时一般会先进行比照,然后选取适合自我需求的,take 此种意义搭配的短语有 take options(选择)、take one's pick(任意挑选)、take the stand/side(选择立场)、take step/measure(选取步骤/措施)、take initiative(选择主动)、take action(选择行动)等。最后,古代文人 take the examination(参加科举考试)也是为了 take(求取)功

名。不用说, take 的另一短语 take a wife(娶妻)也表明了“娶”和“取”之间的联系。

## 5. 结语

借鉴认知语言学相关理论, 我们勾画了英语词汇教学的设想, 主张首先确立基本层次范畴词汇, 然后以其为原型建立词汇范畴, 同时解读多义词各个意义之间的隐喻、转喻延伸机制。此外, 既须发展英汉两种语言的同质性, 同时还需克服其异质性。在课堂词汇教学中, 教师应引导学生重视基本层次范畴词汇的学习, 培养他们隐喻、转喻思维意识和能力, 帮助他们建立相关词汇之间的意义、形式以及发音关联, 使他们能够举一反三、新旧联系、汉英对比, 最终达到词汇学习深度和广度并重的目的。本文一方面阐释语言理论对词汇教学的启发, 另一方面运用一些具体实例阐述操作的可行性, 希望能对相关研究有所启发, 也希望能对国人学习英语有所帮助。

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# 中式菜名的文化意蕴及翻译策略

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**摘要:**中华饮食文化博大精深,在整个传统文化体系中占有举足轻重的地位。中国素以“食”闻名天下。中式菜名也别具匠心,充满诗情画意,不仅反映出食材的配料和烹饪手法,还折射出中华民族独特的文化元素。随着中外交往日益频繁,越来越多的外国人来到中国,体验中国的民俗风情,品尝独特的美味佳肴。因此,将中式菜名翻译得准确、优美,并传递出其中蕴涵的中国文化,对于促进中外人民之间的交流意义重大。本文分析了纷繁复杂的中式菜名里的文化意蕴,并结合实例探讨了相应的翻译原则和策略。

**关键词:**菜名,中国文化,翻译

**Abstract:** The profound Chinese food culture occupies a pivotal position in the traditional culture system. China is famous as the country of gourmet throughout the world. The ingenious names of Chinese dishes are full of poetic illusion, demonstrating the ingredients of food, cooking techniques and the unique cultural elements of the Chinese nation. With more frequent exchanges between China and foreign countries, an increasing number of foreigners come to China to experience the Chinese folk customs and enjoy the delicacies with Chinese characteristics. Therefore, an accurate and elegant translation of Chinese dishes which promotes related Chinese culture is of great significance in the exchanges between peoples in China and from foreign countries. This paper analyzes the cultural connotations in colorful and complex Chinese dish names and explores the corresponding translation principles and strategies with examples.

**Keywords:** Names of dishes, Chinese culture, Translation

## 1. 引言

“中国菜肴甲天下”,其悦耳动听的菜名不仅具有语用功能,而且承载着大量的中国传统文化。国外宾客在品尝中式菜肴时,除了希望了解吃的是什么,还渴望从中学到一定的中国文化知识。目前,中式菜谱的英译工作缺乏统一的规范,中国各大酒店、饭馆的菜单通常翻译得五花八门,如“驴打滚儿”翻译成 Rolling Donkey(翻滚的驴子),“红烧狮子头”翻译成 Red Burned Lion Head(烧红了的狮子头),“麻婆豆腐”翻译成 Tofu Made by a Pock-

Marked Woman(满脸雀斑的女人制作的豆腐)。这些翻译往往让外国人一头雾水,同时也在国内外造成了负面影响。如今,随着全球化进程不断推进,有必要将中式菜名里的文化特色传播出去,提出有利于弘扬中国传统文化的翻译原则和翻译策略刻不容缓。

## 2. 中式菜名折射出的中国传统文化

### 2.1 中国人的吉祥文化和图腾崇拜

在中国人的年夜饭桌上,总会发现“年年有余”“金玉满堂”“五福临门”“招财进宝”“前程似锦”这类带有吉祥与祝福寓意的菜肴。如意吉祥、福寿安康是中华民族亘古不变的愿望与追求,因此中国的菜名也注重讨个好彩头。如“年年有余”,主要食材是鱼,“余”与“鱼”谐音,寓意生活富足,每年都有多余的财富及粮食;“五福临门”,以香菇、素鸡、烤麸、金针菜、鹌鹑蛋为五种主料,拥有五味口感,因此得名,寓意长寿、富贵、无病、多子、善终,五福齐到家,代表幸福美满的人生。此外,在寓意吉祥的菜名中,有许多以龙、凤命名,如“龙凤呈祥”“祥龙献瑞”“鸾凤和鸣”“鲤跃龙门”等。在中国古代传说及神话故事中,龙以其叱咤风云、呼风唤雨的本领成为万兽之首;凤以其色彩绚丽、风姿绰约的外貌成为百鸟之王。龙、凤象征着权势、高贵、尊荣、吉祥。以龙、凤命名的菜肴正是中国人对龙、凤图腾的崇拜在饮食文化中的延伸和体现。这些寓意吉祥的菜名悦耳动听,特色鲜明,内涵丰富,极费心思,也体现了中国人民的生活情趣和积极乐观的生活态度。

### 2.2 中国的历史文化典故

在品种繁多的中华美食中,有许多以人名、地名、民间传说、历史故事命名的菜肴,这些菜肴包含着丰富的历史文化知识,体现了中国独特的民俗风情和地方风情。比如“曹操鸡”,也叫“逍遥鸡”,是知名徽菜,创始于三国时期。相传曹操屯兵庐州(今安徽合肥)时头痛病发作,厨师遵照医嘱选用当地仔鸡烹制成药膳鸡,曹操食用后觉得味道鲜美,很是喜爱,而且头痛渐愈,身体逐渐康复,尔后常食此鸡,此菜也因此得名“曹操鸡”。闽菜中首屈一指的名牌佳肴“佛跳墙”,用料讲究,制法独特,用酒坛装鸡、鸭、羊肉、猪肚、鸽蛋及海产品等20多种原料及辅料煨制而成。相传,在1300多年前的唐代,一位名叫玄荃的高僧,在往福建少林寺途中,路过“闽都”福州,夜宿旅店,正好隔墙人家以“满坛香”宴奉宾客,高僧嗅之垂涎三尺,顿弃佛门多年修行,跳墙而入,一享“满坛香”,这便是“佛跳墙”一菜的由来。另一道名菜当属“西湖醋鱼”。这道闻名遐迩的浙菜,始制于南宋高宗时,通常选用草鱼做原料,烧好时,要浇上一层平滑油亮的糖醋三十。装盘后,鱼胸鳍竖起,肉质鲜美,带有蟹味,鲜嫩酸甜,让人回味无穷。相传在南宋时,有宋氏两兄弟住在西湖边,靠打鱼为生。当地恶霸赵大官人垂涎宋嫂美貌,害死宋兄,欲霸占宋嫂。为报仇,宋嫂一起到衙门喊冤告状,但官府与恶势力勾结,告状不成,反遭毒打。回家后,宋嫂只有让弟弟远逃他乡。分手时,宋嫂特用糖、醋烧鲩鱼一碗,对兄弟说:“这菜有酸有甜,望你有出头之日,勿忘今日辛酸。”“西湖醋鱼”这道菜也伴随着这个故事流传开来。这类带有历史文化典故的菜名在中华美食中数不胜数,比较有名的还有“霸王别姬”“东坡肉”“麻婆豆腐”“狗不理包子”“宋嫂鱼羹”“宫保鸡丁”“贵妃鸡翅”“孔

雀东南飞”等。每个菜名的背后都有一段令人难忘的故事。

### 2.3 中国人的审美观

中国人对菜名的选取十分挑剔,追求“三美”,即“形美、音美、意美”。即便菜肴食材普通,但根据其颜色、形状等特征,中国人依然能利用其独到的审美观和高深的艺术修养赋予菜肴充满诗意的名称。品尝美食时,不仅能得到味觉上的极大满足,还能享受心灵上的愉悦。比如“金鱼戏莲”,光听名字,实在让人想不出食材为何物,事实上,“金鱼戏莲”是一道有名的湘菜,以鱿鱼为主料巧制而成,鱿鱼卷似金鱼,嬉戏于以鸡蛋、虾料子和青豆精制的“莲子”中,由此得名“金鱼戏莲”。此菜刀工精湛,酸辣香鲜,鱿鱼脆嫩,“莲子”滑润。再如“蝴蝶飘海”,主要材料有财鱼、鸡蛋、红萝卜等,食用时将鱼片放入沸滚的火锅中烫熟捞起,蘸调味料食用,因鱼片烫涮后形状似蝴蝶而得名。此外,中国人常对家常菜的菜名进行艺术化处理,如用“芙蓉”代表“蛋青”,将“黄豆芽”称为“如意”,“绿豆芽”称为“龙须”;把“青菜”比作“翡翠”,“豆腐”化为“白玉”,“辣椒丝”喻作“珊瑚”,由此引发的一系列菜名,联想丰富,典雅含蓄,如“翡翠虾仁”(青豆炒虾仁)、“烧白玉”(烧豆腐)、“芙蓉银耳”(蛋清银耳汤)、“珊瑚金钩”(红辣椒丝浇豆芽)。写意型的菜名充满了浪漫主义色彩,在中国传统饮食中不胜枚举,“七星伴月”“青龙卧雪”“孔雀开屏”“白雪映红梅”“金钩挂玉盘”“蝶恋花”等,无一不体现出华夏文字的精妙,以及中国人独到的审美观。

### 2.4 中华民族的“贵和”思想

两千多年来,在孔子倡导的儒家思想的影响下,“贵和”的文化传统已深深植根于中华儿女的生活中,深刻影响着人们的思想观念和行为方式。在对外政策中,中国历来主张“亲仁善邻”“协和万邦”;在中国56个民族之间的交往中,中国倡导“和谐统一”;在人际交往中,中国人提倡“和而不同”;在家庭生活中,中国人向往“和和美美”;在与自然的相处中,中国人则秉承着“天人合一”的态度。中华民族的“贵和”思想,也在菜肴命名中充分体现。有不少菜名直接带有“和”“合”等字,如“百年好合”,是由百合、红枣、银耳、桂圆等数种食物合煮的甜饮,常出现在中国人的婚宴中,寄托着对新人的美好祝愿。也有通过意象体现祥和之景的,如“百鸟朝凤”,由嫩母鸡和猪肉炖煮而成,鸡烂脱骨,色泽鲜艳,滋味香醇,鸟形饺子将母鸡包围,形如百鸟朝凤,表达了人民对盛世和平的期盼和赞美之情。

## 3. 翻译原则

### 3.1 寓意“吉祥”,体现“贵和”菜名的英译

传承着中华民族吉祥文化和“贵和”思想的菜名通常选用中国家喻户晓的成语及谚语来命名,菜肴的烹饪手法以及主要食材往往不会出现在菜名中。对于这类菜名,在翻译时可采用意译加注的方法。寓意吉祥如意的菜名,如“五福临门”可译为 *Mushrooms, Vegetarian Chicken, Baked Bran, Lily Flowers and Quail Eggs* (*Five blessings have descended upon the house: longevity, wealth, health, a full house of descendants and a good end*) ,

“金玉满堂”可译为 Shrimp and Egg Soup (Treasures Filling the Hall)。寓意和谐的菜名，如“百年好合”可译为 Sweetened Red Bean Paste with Lotus Seeds and Lily (Harmonious Union Lasting a Hundred Years)。这种意译加注的翻译方法先将菜肴的主要食材呈现出来，让食客一目了然，明白自己吃的是什么，再用加注的办法来解释菜名的寓意，从而传达出菜名的文化意蕴。

### 3.2 体现图腾崇拜菜名的英译

“龙”和“凤”属中国独特的民俗文化组成部分，在中国传统文化中代表吉祥如意，并且经常作为喻体出现在菜名中。中华民族对龙凤图腾的崇拜在菜肴的命名中得到了充分展示。这类菜名通常具有丰富的象征意义，在翻译时应确保目的语最大化地体现源语承载的文化信息，因此可采用直译加注的翻译方法，如“百鸟朝凤”可译为 Hundreds of Birds Paying Homage to the Phoenix (Stewed Chicken with Ham Dumplings)，“龙凤呈祥”可译为 Dragon and Phoenix Bringing Auspiciousness (Snake and Chicken Soup)。先采取直译法尽可能忠实地传达出菜名的文化色彩，再采用加注的方法辅助说明菜肴的主要食材。

### 3.3 蕴涵历史文化典故菜名的英译

这类菜名的翻译方法可分为两种。第一，以人名/地名+主料的菜名采用直译加注的策略，如“曹操鸡”可译作 Cao Cao Chicken (The diet chicken cured the headache of Cao Cao, a famous military strategist in China's Three Kingdoms Period)。“西湖醋鱼”可译作 West Lake Fish in Vinegar Sauce (Created by Sister Song in the Southern Song dynasty of China)。“麻婆豆腐”可译作 Mapo Tofu (Tofu cooked in hot-spicy meat sauce, created by a woman, Mapo in China's Qing dynasty)。采用直译的翻译方法使菜名简洁明了，通俗易懂，另外再采用加注的方法简要描述其历史典故，既传达出菜肴的食材，又保留了中国特色文化。第二，未体现任何烹饪手法或原材料的菜名采用音译加注的翻译方法。如“佛跳墙”可译作 Fotiaoqiang (Steamed Abalone with Shark's Fin and Fish Maw in Broth. Its smell lured the Buddha in China's Tang dynasty to jump over the wall)。菜名用汉语拼音的方式来呈现，后加注其食材和典故。在如今全球“汉语热”浪潮的冲击下，许多外国人对汉语的兴趣愈发浓厚，将菜名用音译的方式表达，不仅能让外国人知晓这是中国独有的特色美食，激发他们品尝的欲望，还能让他们接触到汉语拼音，学会用中文表达菜名，对他们来说，这无疑是除美食外的又一大惊喜。此外，采用音译法翻译的中国美食还有许多，如具有中国特色且被外国人接受的传统食品：饺子 (Jiaozi)、包子 (Baozi)、馒头 (Mantou)、烧卖 (Shaomai)、汤圆 (Tangyuan)、粽子 (Zongzi) 等。

### 3.4 具有艺术色彩菜名的英译

对于这类菜名的英译，一些研究文章认为可摒弃菜名呈现的意境和韵味，采用意译法将菜肴的烹饪手法、用料等表层信息译出即可。比如，“金鱼戏莲”译作 Sleeve-Fish and Tomatoes，“蝴蝶飘海”译作 Quick-Boiled Fish Slices，“孔雀开屏”译作 Cold Meat in Peacock Shape，“七星伴月”译作 Roasted Pork and Scallops Blended with Vegetables，“翡翠虾仁”译作 Stir-Fried Shrimps with Peas，“烧白玉”译作 Braised Tofu。尽管这种译法简明清晰，并

有效地将菜肴的表层信息传达给食客,但菜名中蕴涵的深层次的文化内涵却被抹去,同时被剥夺的还有食客欣赏和追求美的权利。因此,笔者认为,这类菜名应采用直译加注的翻译方法,最大程度地保留其艺术色彩与诗情画意的美妙境界,让食客感受到菜名的美,并惊叹于中国人民高深的艺术修养。同时,采用加注法辅助说明菜肴的原料、烹饪方法,以达到写意与写实互补的功效。如“金鱼戏莲”可译作 Gold Fish Playing on the Leaves of Lotus (Sleeve-Fish and Tomatoes),“蝴蝶飘海”可译作 Butterfly Fluttering across the Sea(Quick-Boiled Fish Slices),“孔雀开屏”可译作 Peacock Spreading Its Tail(Cold Meat in Peacock Shape),“七星伴月”可译作 Seven Stars Surrounding the Moon(Roasted Pork and Scallops Blended with Vegetables),“翡翠虾仁”可译作 Stir-Fried Shrimps with Jade(Peas),“烧白玉”可译作 Braised White Jade(Tofu)。此外,这类菜肴往往色彩鲜艳,造型美观,令人垂涎欲滴。因此,在菜名下附上图片,可给食客带来视觉上美的冲击,使其胃口大增。

## 4. 结语

中华菜名文化意蕴深厚,渗透在中国人生活的方方面面。菜名的英译既要严谨、无误,也要兼顾其文化艺术色彩。总体来说,具有丰富文化内涵的菜名的翻译原则应主要采取直译与加注相结合的方式。由于笔者能力有限,本文仅对具有丰富文化内涵菜名的翻译策略进行浅谈。改进和提高中华菜名的翻译质量,将中国饮食文化发扬光大,需要更多有识之士共同努力。

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# 中国大学生“个人主义”文化价值观调查

——以华中科技大学为例<sup>①</sup>

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**摘要:**本研究基于美国文化心理学家 Harry C. Triandis 的水平和垂直型个人主义-集体主义理论,以问卷的形式调查了华中科技大学 142 名大学生( $M=97, F=45$ )的个人主义文化价值观持有状况。结果表明,当代大学生具有较强个人主义文化价值观倾向,且水平方向个人主义高于垂直方向个人主义。同时,受试价值观在年级和生源地两个人口统计学特征上有显著差异:新生较二年级学生,来自沿海地区的较来自内地的学生,表现出更高的个人主义倾向。

**关键词:**中国大学生,文化价值观,个人主义

**Abstract:** Based on the American social cultural psychologist Harris C. Triandis' theory of horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism, this paper investigates the cultural values of individualism of 142 college students ( $M=97, F=45$ ) in Huazhong University of Science and Technology (HUST). The results show that: Chinese college students do show a clear orientation in individualism, and the horizontal score is higher than the vertical one. Preference in individualism is statistically different in two demographic features: academic grade and source place. Freshmen have a higher preference for individualism than sophomores; and students from the more open and developed coastal areas are more individualism-oriented than students from the inland areas of China.

**Keywords:** Chinese college students, Cultural values, Individualism

## 一、引言

新千年之交,全球化浪潮以更猛烈之势席卷世界各地,这股浪潮也给中国社会生活方方面面带来了深刻的影响。两千多年前,老子所描绘的“鸡犬之声相闻,老死不相往来”的理想社会,对于当今的中国人来说,已不可想象。中国社会经过了三十多年改革开放的洗礼,

<sup>①</sup> 本文受华中科技大学高水平基础性外语学科建设项目资助。

从严格而整齐划一的计划经济向更加灵活多元的市场经济转变,社会产品极大丰富,人民生活水平显著提高。根据世界银行2009年10月发布的《2008年世界发展指标》报告,2008年中国的GDP总量所占份额超过9%,高于日本的7%,跃居全球第二。

在新的国际国内形势下,中国社会的骄子、未来社会建设的中流砥柱——当代大学生,也表现出一些新的特点和面貌,面临着一系列新的机遇和挑战。当代大学生,通常被称为“90后”(post-90s generation),出生于20世纪90年代,多是中国计划生育政策下的独生子女,成长于中国改革开放物质成果丰硕的新世纪。美国《时代周刊》2007年7月26日刊登了Simon Elegant撰写的封面文章,称他们为“me-generation”(唯我一代),把他们描述为“西化的、个人主义的、以自我为中心”的一代人。在几千年来集体主义文化价值观呈主流态势的中国社会,当代大学生的个人主义文化价值观倾向程度到底如何,在其学习、生活中有什么样的表现形式,对高校教育工作者提出了哪些新的问题和挑战,本文尝试对这些问题作出解答。

## 二、文献综述

### (一)国外个人主义文化价值观研究

Hofstede(1980)对于文化价值观维度的研究,激发了现代意义上学者们对于文化价值观领域的研究热潮。霍氏基于20世纪60年代末70年代初对于全球IBM员工大规模的实证调查,得出了可以将各国文化进行数值高低比较的四个文化价值观维度,“个人主义-集体主义”(I/C)便是其中之一。Hofstede对世界上53个国家的I/C程度进行了测评,并依次排序。如表1所示,美国是个人主义文化的典型代表,日本的集体主义程度比美国高;尽管没有中国大陆的样本,但从中国台湾和香港两个地区的指数可以推断:中国的集体主义程度要高于日本,更甚于美国。

表1 Hofstede I/C维度主要国家/地区排序(部分)

个人主义指标	西方国家				亚洲国家和地区				
	美国	澳大利亚、英国	加拿大	德国	日本	中国香港	新加坡	韩国	中国台湾
指数	91	90、89	80	67	46	25	20	18	17
排序	1	2	4—5	15	22—23	37	39—41	43	44

注:1.排序中序号1为最高,序号53为最低。

2.数据来自Hofstede的*Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*(1991)。

Hofstede的研究成果受到了来自管理学、人类文化学、心理学等诸多领域学者们的推崇,三十多年来学者们的主要研究成果包括以下三个方面。

第一,“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观的概念界定研究。如美国文化心理学家Harry C. Triandis认为,在个人主义文化中,社会行为主要由个人目标决定,个人目标仅有很小一部分与集体目标重合,个人倾向于与所属集体分离,重视竞争、独立、自治和自立;他对集体主义的定义为:“个人目标服从集体目标,和谐、互相依赖和关心他人的意向。”(Triandis,

1986)美国女学者 Oyserman(1993)认为,个人主义强调个人的责任和选择的自由,发挥个人的潜力,并尊重他人的完整性。保加利亚学者 Schwartz(1990)将个人主义价值观定义为一种重要社会契约,其中包括狭义的基本群体,以及为实现某种社会地位所需的特定责任和义务之间进行协商的社会关系。在“个人主义-集体主义”价值观的早期研究中,学者们倾向于把它们看成是单向维度的对立两极,即一种文化只能是非此即彼(Hui, 1988; Hui & Triandis, 1986)。但是从 20 世纪 90 年代起,学者们逐渐认识到,“个人主义-集体主义”并不是对立的单项维度的两极(Triandis, et al., 1988)。大多数文化都是这两种元素的混合体。这一观点也在实证研究中得到证明,如 Yamagishi(1988)发现,日本人的集体主义并非文化沉淀,而是取决于外部制度环境,如果惩罚机制不存在,日本人比美国人更不愿意进行团队合作。

第二,“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观的特性研究。20 世纪 90 年代初至 90 年代中期,学者们通过大量文化对比的实证研究,探讨了个人主义和集体主义文化价值观的不同表现特性。综述起来,到目前为止共四种:1)个体的独立与个体间的相互依赖(Markus & Kitayama, 1991);2)个人目标很少和集体目标一致与个人目标服从集体目标(Schwartz, 1990);3)社会行为取决于个人态度和内心想法与社会行为取决于责任和义务(Bontempo & Rivero, 1992);4)个人利益重于个体间相互关系与个人利益屈从于个体间相互关系(Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, & Yoon, 1994)。

第三,对不同文化和个体的“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观差异的实证研究。20 世纪 90 年代末至新千年以来,学者们的研究多见于多领域多视角的实证研究,如美国学者 Valery I. Chirkov, et al. (2005)使用情景问卷调查了“个人主义-集体主义”倾向对文化距离与文化适应的影响;Marion Hutchinson 和 Ferdinand A. Gul(1997)调查了“个人主义-集体主义”交互效应对学生小组学习理念的影响;Suraj Kapoor, et al. (2003)研究了“个人主义-集体主义”对美国和印度学生交际风格的影响。

## (二)国内个人主义文化价值观研究

国内文化价值观研究始于 20 世纪 90 年代,研究者除了来自各科研机构外,多为高校教师,主要研究内容涉及以下三个方面。

第一,西方个人主义文化价值观的研究。学者们着重探讨了西方,尤其是美国,个人主义价值观的产生、演变和表现。如卢风(1994)简评了西方个人主义价值观的要义;王晓俊(2010)讨论了美国个人主义价值观的根源;魏晓红(2010)进行了美国个人主义价值观的双重性研究;孙雪波(2005)从跨文化角度对美式个人主义进行了解读;肖平(2010)用模因论理论观照了美国个人主义价值观的衍生与嬗变。其他一些学者则通过实例,从语言、社会交往、企业文化等角度对西方(特别是美国)的个人主义文化价值观进行了详解(郑奕,2007;石新华,2008;詹婷婷,2007 等)。

第二,对于中西“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观的比较研究。学者们从宏观和微观视角,运用理论和实证的方法,选取特定的两个文化,进行了 I/C 维度文化价值观的比较。顾力行(2012)将价值观作为文化的核心,从理论层面探讨了价值观研究的框架。丁新宇(2010)集中比较了中美价值观中的集体主义与个人主义。孙晓杰(2007)比较了中国和澳大利亚集体主义/个人主义文化下的父母育儿风格与幼儿人格的关系。唐昱(2013)比较了美

国的个人主义与中国的仁爱思想。海源(2009)对中美大学生非言语交际中的集体主义/个人主义倾向进行了实证研究。

第三,对于中国“个人主义”文化价值观的研究。国内对于中国人本身个人主义价值观的研究不少,近两年还有上升的趋势。在中国,“个人主义”长期与“利己主义”混为一谈,在意识形态上和经济活动中一直受到批判,直到 20 世纪 90 年代才有了较客观的理论探讨和实证研究。但至今仍有许多学者,特别是思想教育工作者,对个人主义持批判态度。如郝清杰(1999)撰文述评 20 世纪 90 年代个人主义研究,谈到了国人对个人主义的张扬与批判;刘小云(2005)和宋洪兴(2008)分析了中国大学生个人主义价值观的现象和原因,都建议要对个人主义倾向进行“纠正”和“纠偏”。但近年来的研究更强调学理上的合理性。香港浸会大学的 S. Lau(1992)通过对我国内地及香港地区居民和新加坡华人的调查,探讨了集体主义文化中的个人主义。研究发现,中国与美国受试在“个人主义-集体主义”维度上无显著差异,且中国受试(尤其是内地居民)有强烈的个人主义倾向。汤平、陈正伦(2007)运用定量研究方法,调查了东西部 8 所高校的 1028 名本科生,分析了学生个人主义的总体倾向,并分析了年级、性别、英语水平对学生个人主义倾向的影响。调查结果显示,个人主义倾向在本科学生中具有比较明显的趋势。

综上所述,在“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观领域,国内外学者在文化价值观概念界定、衡量尺度体系、跨文化比较方面,已经取得了大量成果,但是在以下方面还存在不足:1)“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观比较尺度体系需进一步探讨和完善,尽管国内外学者提出了很多比较尺度框架,但普遍公认的理论框架仍屈指可数,经过实证研究已得到证明的、界定清晰的就更少。2)对于中国人个人主义文化价值观的研究处于起步阶段。大部分研究还集中在对西方世界的探讨,而关注中国国内发展,针对中国人,特别是中国年轻人当下个人主义文化价值观的理论和实证研究都十分缺乏。

基于国内外研究现状,本研究重点探讨当代中国大学生“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观持有状况,对当代思维最活跃、最具活力的大学生的“个人主义-集体主义”文化价值观做实际调查,描述出这一人群在该维度文化价值观上的倾向和态度;从人口统计学特征的角度,找出影响该人群个人主义文化价值观的相关因素,如性别、年级、专业、生源地等。

本研究具体回答两个问题:

- 1)当代大学生个人主义文化价值观现状如何?
- 2)性别、年级、专业、生源地四个人口统计学特征对该维度价值观的倾向影响如何?

### 三、研究方法

#### (一)受试

参与本次问卷调查的共有华中科技大学 150 名学生,回收有效问卷 142 份。研究对象涵盖不同性别、不同专业、不同年级、不同生源地,具体分布见表 2:

表 2 受试人口统计学特征分布表

人口统计学特征	受试人数	比例 (%)
性别		
男	97	68.3
女	45	31.7
专业		
文科	68	47.9
理工科	74	52.1
年级		
大一	53	37.3
大二	89	62.7
生源地		
沿海	27	19.0
内地	115	81.0

## (二)问卷设计

本次调查使用的问卷采用中文设计,包括三个部分:第一部分是学生的基本信息,包括学生性别、年级、专业、生源地;第二部分为多项选择,调查学生了解西方文化的途径及对大学集体主义教育的看法;第三部分根据 Triandis 个人主义价值观调查量表设计,共包括 16 个调查题项,水平和垂直方向的个人主义和集体主义各 4 项。每个题项包含一个陈述,陈述使用利克特五级量表,受试根据自己的实际情况在“1”到“5”的数字中进行选择;“1”代表该陈述与受试的实际情况“完全符合”,“5”代表该陈述与受试的实际情况“完全不符合”。从 1 至 5,程度递减。比如,受试对“在做一件事情时,我宁愿靠自己而不想依赖别人”这一表述,根据自己的实际情况在 1 到 5 的数字上打钩。

## (三)数据收集与分析

笔者通过与任课教师联系,在华中科技大学随机选取了 4 个班级,包括理工科(如机械、计算机、材料等)和文科(中文、社会学、新闻、公管等)不同专业。学生在大学英语课和公选课课堂上完成问卷。填写之前,对学生简要介绍调查内容,并对问卷填写要求做简要说明;学生填完后,可以得到小礼物,以此尽量保证回收问卷内容的有效性。此次调查共发出问卷 150 份,回收有效问卷 142 份。

笔者将回收的问卷汇总。首先进行原始数据初步处理,如将名词性表述的数据进行编码,将各信息项目编号等;然后将每一份问卷反映的信息逐一录入到社会学统计软件 SPSS (Version 17.0)中。受试对每个题项在五级利克特量表上选择的数字即为受试在该题项上的得分。在此基础之上,统计相关分值及分布情况,如人口统计学特征下个人主义价值观的得分分布等。

## 四、结果和讨论

### (一)个人主义文化价值观整体态度

问卷第二部分的三个多项选择题调查了大学生对待个人主义文化价值观的整体态度。

第一题涉及学生接触西方文化的主要来源,121位同学同时选择了“课堂老师讲解”“西方影视作品”和“西方报纸刊物”。由此可见,对于大学生来说,课堂仍是他们获取知识的主要信息通道。在华中科技大学这所工科背景浓厚的综合性大学,对于大多数理工科院系的同学来说,从大学英语课堂和相关选修课堂上获取的关于西方文化的知识,对他们形成有关西方价值观的认知起到至关重要的作用。网络媒介的发达,使得学生获取西方影视作品和新闻报道变得异常便捷。在网上追剧和刷新闻,成为大多数同学每天必做的功课。如何引导学生在课内外获取信息,是值得大学英语教师思考的新课题。

第二题是学生对于大学生集体主义教育的看法。78%的学生认为现有的大学生集体主义教育“不够完善,应该加强集体主义思想教育”,5%的受试认为大学生集体主义教育“没有作用,是形式主义教育”。这反映了绝大多数同学对集体主义持肯定态度,希望加强这方面的观念。

第三题从他者的角度,考查学生对周围同伴是否有集体主义缺失的行为表现进行评价。有3位受试认为他们周围的同学集体主义“缺失特别严重”,24位受试认为“少部分有”,余下的115位受试认为“基本没有”。也就是说,近20%的同学认为周围的同学有或多或少集体主义缺失的表现,可以明显地被同伴体察到。

### (二)个人主义和集体主义价值观得分整体分布

据统计,接受本次调查的大学生在水平个人主义、垂直个人主义、水平集体主义、垂直集体主义四个方向上的价值观得分均值如表3所示:

表3 受试四维度 I/C 文化价值观得分一览表

维度	HI	VI	HC	VC
均值	2.31	2.98	2.23	2.60
SD	0.96	0.97	0.88	0.91

HI(水平个人主义),VI(垂直个人主义),HC(水平集体主义),VC(垂直集体主义)

受试在四个方向上、十六个陈述中的得分均值如图1所示:

图1显示十六个陈述最高均值为3.47,最低均值为1.87,所有均值未达到4和5,都没有“不太符合”和“完全不符合”的陈述。从表3来看,除了垂直方向的个人主义均值居中,接近3,表示“不确定或说不清楚”外,受试在其他三个方向上的均值均大于2小于3,表示“比较符合”。根据Triandis(1995)的定义,持水平个人主义(HI)的人强调的是个人的独立,只是自己做自己的事情,并不注重与他人比较;而持垂直个人主义(VI)的人在强调独立的同时,特别关心与别人的比较,相信竞争是自然界的法则,希望在所有的竞争中获得胜利。持

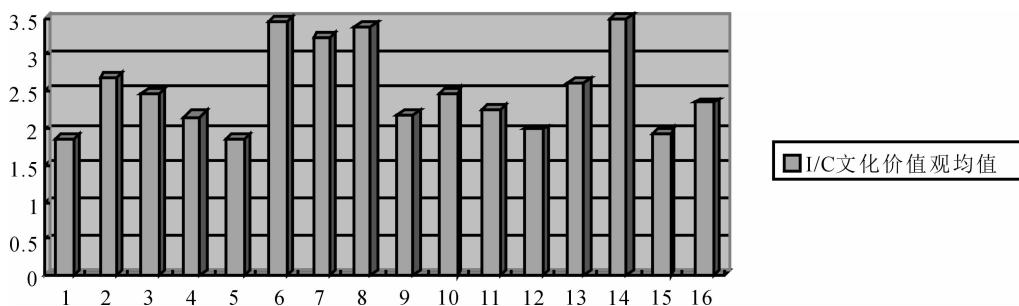


图1 受试各陈述 I/C 文化价值观得分均值柱形图

水平集体主义(HC)的人与团队成员紧密团结(家庭、民族、国家、工作小组等),团队的幸福对他们来说很重要,强调共同目标和社会性,但不轻易顺从权威;相反,持垂直集体主义(VC)的人强调服从团队,甚至为了团队目标可以牺牲个人目标,支持组内成员与组外成员竞争。

受试的 HI 为 2.31, VI 为 2.98。也就是说,当代大学生比较赞同个人应该独立,依靠自己,并且有自己的个性,与众不同,“走自己的路,让别人说去吧”。但是在保持个性的同时,他们不反对,也“不确定或说不清”是否应该事事比他人做得好,事事争第一。在文化价值观上,表现出了明显的和较强的个人主义倾向。

个人主义两个方向上的得分情况,可以在现实生活中得到充分体现。当代大学生在穿着打扮、言谈举止各方面,都不希望“宜乎众矣”,总要尽力表现出自己的特点。个性化的服饰、发型、个人用品,QQ、微博、微信、人人网等社交媒体上设置的各种个性化头像、签名、表情等,时刻凸显出个体的与众不同,并且大多数同学都乐此不疲。说话喜欢用新新人类的“火星语”,在课堂上和课外都乐于向老师和同伴积极表达自己的看法,不隐藏自己的观点。大部分同学在课外都参加了发展自身特长和爱好的社团组织,以及各类社会实践活动。对于90后的学生来说,课余打工、开网店都已不是什么稀奇事。但是我们也看到,在各种各样竞技性的集体活动中,比如说与英语相关的英语演讲赛、辩论赛、口译大赛等,学生们的参与面并不广。虽然大家基本认同“竞争是自然法则”,但并“不确定或说不清楚”“胜利就是一切”或“比其他人做得好,成为 No. 1 对我很重要”。当代大学生追求个性,展现个性,希望得到外界的关注和认可;他们承认竞争,但在行为表现上并不追求事事冒尖、“唯我独尊”。

当代大学生个人主义文化价值观的形成有众多原因。首先,从物质基础来说,他们拥有更加富足、开放的成长环境。这代90后大学生出生并成长于国际经济全球化、国内改革开放成果丰硕的时代。从计划经济到市场经济的转变,从国有经济一统天下到国家宏观调控下的多种经济形式共同发展,为人们解放思想,尊重多样化发展,提供了现实可能。社会产品丰富多样,人们的选择也随之多样化,为大学生追求个性提供了物质基础和保障。其次,从精神层面的价值观发展过程来看,这代大学生成长中接触到大量多元文化。第二部分的调查已经显示,学生们通过各种媒体接触西方文化,信息唾手可得,文化鸿沟变得不再不可逾越。除了网络媒体,在现实生活中,学生们通过外教、外国留学生和出国交换学习,也接触到大量活生生的异文化。根据《人民日报海外版》公布的某教育机构《2013年中国留学市场盘点和2014年趋势展望》报告显示:仅2013年一年,中国留学生人数突破45万名,中国已

成为世界上最大的留学生源国。许多学生在本科时就有到国外交流学习的经历。面对“不同”，学生们有惊诧和排斥，但长期、大量、频繁的异文化刺激和沟通，让大多数学生或多或少都具有了一些文化“免疫力”，在精神上能够不同程度地对他人理解和包容。

关于集体主义文化价值观，受试的 HC 为 2.23, VC 为 2.60。也就是说，当代大学生对于集体主义文化价值观是基本认同的，水平方向上他们重视国家、民族、家庭和团队利益，认为与团队成员紧密团结很重要，重视其他集体成员的幸福感；垂直方向上他们认同服从，为了团队利益可以牺牲个人利益，有集体荣誉感。这与我们对长期受集体主义教育的中国学生的认识是一致的。

在现实生活中，绝大多数同学都非常重视家庭，定期和父母、兄弟姐妹打电话，或用社交网络联系，交流生活、学习近况。在学校，班集体对他们来说是另外一个“大家庭”，任课教师、辅导员、班主任、学业导师等就像家长，学生们大部分时间都在一起学习、生活，场所也比较固定。学生的集体主义行为受到学校诸多规章制度的规范。在本次调查的华中科技大学，学校规定低年级学生须进行“三早”（早起床、早读书、早锻炼）活动，学工组进行监督检查；对于课堂到课率，班长要负责记考勤；班级要定期开班会；每学年每个班的学生要自己创意、组织、参与“特色团日”活动；每年学校要组织春季和秋季运动会；每年学校组织评选“优良学风班”等。一系列的规定和常规活动，无形中刺激和加强了学生对于班集体的归属感，增强了同学之间的行为和情感联系。但是，学生们在行为上服从和尊重权威，在思想上并不完全认同追求家庭和集体利益高于追求个人理想。受试对于“对长辈或上司的决策我从来都不反对”持基本赞同态度，但对于“照顾家人是我的责任和义务，这是我人生最重要的目标”这一陈述，给出的均分为 3.5，处于“不确定”和“不完全符合”之间，即当代大学生表现出了自己的个性和想法，并不认为应该盲从权威的意见。

受试的集体主义文化价值观倾向与学生从小受教育的模式和中国传统文化影响有关。到目前为止，大部分的公立教育都是大班教学，从小学到大学，一个班平均有五六十个学生，老师在班集体中拥有绝对权威，学生从小就被教育要“听老师的话”，对老师绝对服从。“尊师重教”的传统一直被沿袭。尊重师长也是学生思想教育不变的话题。从家庭观念来看，受试的新倾向也可以找到合理解释。90 后大学生多是计划生育政策下家中唯一的孩子。他们在成长过程中，受到了物质和精神上全方位的呵护。从大家庭里事事要考虑“我们”，到 90 后成长过程中没有兄弟姐妹，事事只考虑“我”；家长从以前要照顾几个孩子，到如今只需顾及单个孩子的感受，给孩子更多关注和支持，加之西方某些价值观念的影响，无形中，孩子的成长环境、行为模式发生了变化，他们的家庭观念慢慢与父辈们的也不同起来。当代大学生认为应该同时兼顾家庭及个人追求。

### （三）人口统计学特征对个人主义文化价值观选择的影响

将性别、专业、年级和生源地作自变量，学生样本的个人主义文化价值观得分作因变量，进行方差分析，结果如表 4 所示：男生和女生 ( $F = .009, p = .924$ ) 以及文科和理工科学生 ( $F = .006, p = .963$ ) 的个人主义文化价值观没有显著差异，但不同年级 ( $F = 1.236, p = .028$ )、不同生源地 ( $F = 1.943, p = .019$ ) 的学生样本间有显著差异。

表 4 受试人口统计学特征个人主义文化价值观差异方差分析结果

	M	M	F	P
性别	男 = 2.630	女 = 2.700	.009	.924
专业	文 = 2.660	理 = 2.770	.006	.963
年级	大一 = 2.470	大二 = 2.860	1.236	.280
生源地	沿海 = 2.450	内地 = 2.880	1.943	.019

男生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.63$ )和女生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.70$ )没有显著差异,说明在该样本中,性别对受试的个人主义文化价值观没有显著影响。在大学生中,男女生追求个性表达但不确定要“拔尖”的态度是一致的。

文科学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.66$ )和理工科学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.67$ )没有显著差异,说明在该样本中,专业对受试的个人主义文化价值观没有影响。这与类似研究的结果有所不同,如汤平、陈正伦(2007)对中国中西部8所高校的调查显示,从大一到大三,英语专业学生的个人主义倾向强于非英语专业的。本调查的结果可以从以下两方面来解释:第一,受试所在的华中科技大学较重视学生的人文素质教育,本科阶段要求文科和理工科的学生必须选修对方一定的学分,方可毕业,学校的各种人文讲座为学生提供了思维全面发展的沃土;第二,与上文所提调查相比,本调查晚了七年,这几年正值各种网络社交媒体迅猛发展,在学生中迅速流行。平台的草根化,让各专业学生交流更加便利和频繁。

大一学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.47$ )和大二学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.86$ )有显著差异,大一学生的个人主义文化价值观倾向强于大二学生。这与学生刚入大学,更乐于表现自我有一定关系。是否随着年级的升高,学生的个人主义文化价值观会逐渐减弱,需要覆盖各个年级的更大样本来验证。

来自沿海地区学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.45$ )和内地学生的个人主义文化价值观均值( $M=2.88$ )有显著差异。Hofstede(2001)曾发现,一个国家所处的纬度、拥有的人口数以及她的富裕程度都会影响到国民对于“权力距离”的选择。国民的富足既可被看成是较低“权力距离”价值观的结果,也可被看成是引起较低“权力距离”的原因。中国的沿海城市相对其他地区来说,经济较为发达,中等收入家庭所占比重较大。生源地在沿海地区的受试具有更高的个人主义价值观倾向。

## 五、结论

本研究基于美国文化心理学家 Harry C. Triandis 的水平和垂直型个人主义-集体主义理论,以华中科技大学 142 名大学生为样本,调查了当代大学生个人主义文化价值观倾向。调查结果回答了本研究预设的两个研究问题。首先,当代大学生具有较强的个人主义文化价值观倾向,水平方向的个人主义高于垂直方向的个人主义。学生有较强的自我意识和自我行为表达能力,但在日常学习生活中,并不确定要事事争先、获胜、超过同伴。同时,他们

具有较强的集体主义文化价值观,重视家庭和国家、集体利益,崇尚集体成员和谐相处,但不会因为集体利益而放弃个人追求。其次,在本调查考察的性别、专业、年级和生源地四个人口统计学特征中,年级和生源地对学生的个人主义文化价值观有显著影响,性别和专业没有显著影响。一年级的学生个人主义文化价值观倾向强于二年级学生,来自沿海地区的学个人主义文化价值观倾向强于来自内地的学生。

本研究成果具有一定的积极意义。在理论上,本调查结果显示,个人主义和集体主义文化价值观并非此消彼长,作为同一价值观维度的对立两极,而是统一于同一二分价值观维度,同时并行存在。这一结论验证了许多学者的看法,对现有文化价值观研究是一项有益的补充。在实践上,本调查从实证角度反映了当代大学生个人主义文化价值观的现状,对于高校教师和学工管理人员更好地对学生进行教学和管理,具有积极的现实参考意义;对于更好地了解当代中国的年轻人,具有借鉴意义。

当然,本研究囿于研究样本、时间和地域的限制,还有诸多不足。后续研究可以扩大样本数量,涵盖更多地区,进行横向比较;可以延长研究时间,进行历时比较。同时还可以考察个人主义文化价值观和其他文化价值观的动态关联,从深度和广度上推动该领域研究的进一步发展。

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# 叙事时间照射下的殖民悲歌:论《野草在歌唱》的叙事时间艺术

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**摘要:**英国当代作家多丽丝·莱辛在其处女作《野草在歌唱》中,运用了灵活多变的叙事时间,使小说叙事节奏张弛有度。本文将运用热奈特的叙事时间理论,从时序、时距及频率三个维度来具体分析小说如何通过展现南非社会的种种矛盾冲突,以及黑白隔离带来的白人精神危机,来凸显悲歌主题。

**关键词:**《野草在歌唱》,叙事时间,悲歌,精神危机

**Abstract:** Doris Lessing, the contemporary British writer, utilized flexible narrative time in her first novel *The Grass Is Singing* to make it possess highly changeable and balanced rhythms. Through employing Genette's narrative time theory, this paper will probe into the multifarious conflicts in South African society and the whites' spiritual crisis brought by the segregation from three dimensions: order, duration and frequency, aiming to reveal the tragic theme.

**Keywords:** *The Grass Is Singing*, Narrative time, Elegy, Spiritual crisis

## 1. 前言

英国当代作家多丽丝·莱辛凭借其多元的主题、犀利的笔触以及灵活的叙事屹立于世界文坛,并获得了2007年诺贝尔文学奖。莱辛的作品主题广阔、意义深远,从早期以非洲为背景体现种族政治矛盾的《野草在歌唱》,到中期在女性主义及女权运动影响下对女性困境思考的《暴力的孩子们》和《金色笔记》,再到后期的未来小说及太空小说,她用不断探求、不断开拓的眼光发现现代文明的弊端,用女性经验来讲述人类生存的困境,“深入到了20世纪社会生活的许多重要方面”(王丹,2011:269)。

鉴于莱辛丰硕的文学成就,学界对其关注热度持续不减。然而研究焦点多集中在她的中晚期作品,尤其是《金色笔记》,对其处女作《野草在歌唱》(以下简称《野草》)则重视不够。事实上,在《野草》中,莱辛已初步展露了杰出的文学才华。小说情节并不复杂,作者以白人妇女玛丽之死展开倒叙,讲述了其贫困的童年,步入社会之后迫于压力不得不草草结婚,婚后作为白人农场主之妻与黑人的重重矛盾,以及与土著佣人摩西之间的暧昧情愫。在简单

的情节中,莱辛覆盖了南非殖民地社会的多重矛盾,剖析了殖民体系造成的黑白隔离以及白人自身的精神孤立。国内对《野草》的研究发端于夏琼(2001)的《扭曲的人性,殖民的悲歌——评多丽丝·莱辛的〈野草在歌唱〉》,到2009年其研究已呈井喷之势,平均每年有约40篇相关期刊文章及硕博论文面世,研究热点集中在殖民及后殖民理论、女性主义批评、生态女性主义、心理分析、空间理论、原型解读等。国外研究者视野开阔,角度独特新颖,其研究还关注结构主义分析,荣格、莱恩的精神分析等,例如有文章(Wang, 2009)就从精神分析的角度来探讨白人的后殖民罪恶感。纵观中外,对于小说叙事学的研究可谓凤毛麟角,叙事时间分析更是阙如。1972年,叙事学家热奈特(Genette)在其发表的《叙述话语》(Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method)一文中,首次将故事时间与话语时间从时序、时距以及频率三个维度进行了区分。区分此二者是为与传统的叙事时间等于话语时间的叙事模式进行明确切割,而叙事时间的独立也“使读者注意到自然时序被‘人为’安排后出现的更为重要的美学效果和主题意象”(刘丽辉,王江,2007:93)。莱辛的作品“往往痴迷于时间的游戏,在过去的铭记与未来的想象中来回游荡”(Lessing & Raskin, 1990:36)。在《野草》中,其对叙事时间的安排更是匠心独运。本文将运用热奈特的叙事时间理论,探索作者如何从时序、时距及频率三个维度来展现南非社会复杂、深重的多重矛盾及白人统治者自身的撕裂,从而勾勒出一幅悲惨的殖民画卷。

## 2. 交错的时序

小说时间分为故事时间和话语时间两个维度。故事时间涉及“事件发生所需的实际时间”,话语时间则指“用于叙述事件的时间”(申丹,王丽亚,2010:112)。故事时间是线性发展的,话语时间依托故事时间,会因为作者的安排呈现出不同的特色,最为显著的特色即为时序的交错与颠倒。热奈特(1972:35)将时序定义为“故事事件的连续时间顺序与叙事排列中的伪时间顺序的关系”,并划分出倒叙与预叙,其中倒叙为现阶段以前事件的闪回叙述,预叙则是关于预先讲述或提及现阶段之后事件的一切叙述。倒叙纠缠住过去,预叙延伸至未来。倒叙与预叙的结合不仅可以在有限的篇章里提供更多的信息,还可以强化作品主题。

在《野草》中,莱辛一反传统小说的线性叙事结构,以白人妇女玛丽之死展开倒叙,回溯其一生。小说一开篇即告示了玛丽·特纳之死,以及她的死亡对整个南非白人社区的影响,无论平时多么爱高谈阔论的人,“都不约而同地默不作声”(莱辛,1999:2)。更为离奇之处在于,当雇工马斯顿意图说出关于玛丽之死的真相时,其他白人对他进行了阻挠。通过倒叙,叙述者一开始便设置了足够的悬念,玛丽·特纳被谋杀了,却被视为活该;热衷于八卦的社区人们对这件案子三缄其口,警长甚至阻止当事人说出事情的真相。这一切的不寻常通过倒叙得以完美展现,读者的兴趣也被调动起来。此外,将故事的结尾放在文本开头,读者一开始便能感受到白人社区对于同胞的冷漠,南非社会表面上风平浪静,实际上暗潮汹涌的现实也得以显现。在土人问题上,叙述者同样运用倒叙,解释了南非社会长期流传的有关土人下流行径对于白人妇女产生的影响。尽管玛丽“作为工人阶级女性被排除在白人统治和殖民主义的主流之外”,然而依旧深受其害。(Wang, 2009:37)“在她小时候,大人不允许她单独出去散步。她如果要问明根由,大人就悄悄地用一种理所当然的语气低声告诉她(她一想

到这种声音,就联想到她的母亲),土人是怎样下流,保不定就对她做出恶劣的事情来。”(莱辛,1999:57)在倒叙中,读者可以追寻隐藏在叙事间隙里的信息,“增加了单位时间的叙述容量,往往在短短的一句话中就网络住了漫长的头绪和纷纭的过去”(郝桂莲,2009:120)。尽管玛丽并没有直面土人,但是母亲代表的社会力量已经告诫甚至恐吓了她:白人女性必须与黑人隔离。倒叙不仅展示了玛丽在种族问题上深受白人社会的影响,也预示了后文中玛丽与土人的激烈矛盾冲突。

相比倒叙,预叙预示了故事的发展走向,更容易在叙述未达之时渲染气氛,埋下伏笔,暗示结局。与迪克的婚姻生活使玛丽感到失望,在听着迪克喋喋不休时,她感到“现在并不是在这屋子里和丈夫坐在一起,而是回到了母亲身边”,同时“亡父从坟墓里送出了遗嘱,逼迫她去过母亲生前非过不可的那种生活”(莱辛,1999:52)。玛丽的心理活动恰是对她婚姻生活的预叙,贫穷的婚后生活导致幼年时父母亲带来的阴影在玛丽今后的人生中的确如影随形。预叙仿佛是无所不能的上帝在宣告特纳夫妇宿命式的悲剧。除了经济上困窘,迪克不善经营以及性格上的缺点也是导致他们婚姻失败的原因之一。“随便哪个女人,嫁给了像迪克这样的男人,迟早总会懂得自己只能做两种选择:或者是白白地气愤、白白地反抗,最后把自己弄得发疯并且粉身碎骨;或者是努力克制自己,任劳任怨,含辛茹苦。”(莱辛,1999:93)这段预叙正是玛丽命运的写照。在嫁给迪克之后,玛丽对婚姻生活充满不满,却仍然竭力克制、包容。当她清醒地认识到迪克性格上的缺点之后,却也无力阻止,只能是白白地气愤、反抗,最终陷入疯癫。面对土人摩西,玛丽心中充满痛苦、挣扎,“在痛苦的折磨中,她仿佛又听见了他刚才的声音,那样坚定,又那样亲切,好像她的亲生父亲在命令她一样。”(莱辛,1999:163)这一处预叙预示了摩西的形象与玛丽亡父的形象重叠,而在后文中玛丽的梦境里,摩西代表着她的亡父多次出现。亡父在玛丽的生命中,象征了玛丽最初懵懂的两性意识,象征了与她那“刻板的女权思想”截然不同的思想;她对男性畏惧以及被男性吸引,皆源于此。而摩西代表着她的亡父,既让玛丽畏惧也让她无法抗拒。随着玛丽与摩西相处,玛丽逐渐被这个土人“迷住了心窍”,然而“她克制着自己,觉得自己好像站在一条黑暗的隧道中,正逐步走近一个可怕的终点”(莱辛,1999:180)。叙述者又一次运用预叙,为玛丽和摩西的关系笼罩上悲剧的阴影,读者似乎可以预见玛丽最终死亡的命运。

### 3. 变换的时距

无论是叙事时间的发展还是叙事节奏的快慢,都离不开时距的自由变换。时距作为热奈特叙事时间理论的一个重要组成部分,指代“事件或故事片段实际所需时间与其在叙事讲述中所需时间的关系”,又可分为省略、概述、场景和停顿四种情况。(Genette,1972:35)省略和概述是为了加快叙事节奏,同时为故事留白,而场景和停顿则是为了突出、强调故事的某一部分,以达到强化主旨的效果。莱辛在《野草》中大量运用概述和场景,使得小说叙事犹如一篇乐章,强弱分明。

小说中对于玛丽童年及婚前生活的描写只用了一个章节,占全文篇幅的十分之一,而故事时间却是三十年。概述可以“在叙事文本中把一段特定的故事时间压缩为表现其主要特征的较短的句子,以此来加快速度”(谭君强,2008:138)。玛丽的童年尽管不幸,却并非叙述

的重点,运用概述可以节省篇幅,加快速度,使小说主次分明。此外,对玛丽婚前生活的概述,在加快叙事节奏的同时,也让读者渐渐发现,这段时光正是玛丽一生中最为幸福的时光。在快速推进的叙事时间里,读者会感受到欢乐的时光总是格外短暂,正与后文中对玛丽婚后煎熬生活的工笔细描形成强烈的反差。随后,玛丽与迪克商定结婚,叙述者只用了一段话,几笔带过,将玛丽仓促的婚姻真实地展现在读者面前。生活的窘迫使迪克进行了一系列尝试,首先是养蜂,然后是养猪,养吐绶鸡、安哥拉兔,最后是开黑人用品商店。迪克的每一次尝试都无果而终,叙述者并没有用大段篇幅来描述迪克的一次次尝试,而是用“六个月以后”或“没几个月后的一天”来概述,叙事时间明显短于故事时间,叙事节奏加快。加快的叙事节奏,无疑可以在读者的阅读过程中制造紧张感;人物之间的关系也在不断加快的叙事节奏里变得紧张,对立更显尖锐。迪克一次次一意孤行,又半途而废,生意的失败使他们的夫妻关系日益恶化,玛丽也因此“看透了迪克的真正性格”(莱辛,1999:85)。然而她的反抗——离家出走——却失败了,男权社会的重压注定了玛丽在面对迪克的弱点时无能为力,终至灭亡。

相比概述,场景描写拉长了叙事时间,可以使观众对人物的言行及心理有更直观的感受。对玛丽与迪克的新婚之夜,叙述者以玛丽的眼光进行了详细描述,甚至对浴室也进行了细致入微地描写,无论是糊着泥土和小树枝的泥墙,还是漏雨的铁皮屋顶的接缝,都使读者对玛丽恶劣的生存环境有深刻的印象,从而对玛丽产生深切的同情。随后的婚姻生活中,为了突出玛丽的绝望,叙述者仍然运用场景描写来不遗余力地表现玛丽在这种生活下的痛苦与煎熬。一旦写到玛丽与土人的交往,无论是在店铺里遇到的土人妇女,还是在农场监工时遇到的土人男人,叙述者都着意用大段的篇幅、细致的场景描述来表现玛丽作为白人妇女在面对土人时害怕与憎恶共存的心理状态。直到摩西到来,叙述者为了展现玛丽是如何一步步走向崩溃的,于是工笔细描玛丽与摩西相处的点点滴滴,无论是摩西穿着短衫裤时“肌肉紧贴着衣服凸了出来”,还是他在洗澡时白色的肥皂泡衬托着漆黑的皮肤,还是“沉默寡言地站在门口的阳光中,眼睛不望任何东西”,叙述者一点一点地讲述着,实际上也是玛丽在一点一点地感受着土人摩西的存在。(莱辛,1999:155)场景描述详细地刻画出了玛丽处于撕裂中的心理状态,白人社会的道德与她对摩西的感情发生了激烈的冲突。到了最后,叙述者甚至用整个章节来描写玛丽死亡前一天发生的事情,叙事时间被无限拉长,故事也渐入高潮。叙述者以玛丽的眼光来感受非洲大地,感受灌木丛,感受炎热的太阳。在细腻的感受中,玛丽发现了自己是如何从早年那个“有些傻气的姑娘”变成如今这样处于不幸之中,也发现了非洲大地摧枯拉朽的力量必将毁灭一切文明的迹象。在拉长的时间中,读者可以捕捉到玛丽内心深处的细微活动,从而更加深刻地理解玛丽的人生悲剧。此外,缓慢前行的叙事时间使得玛丽注定的灭亡被缓慢地推进、酝酿,终于,当她无法获得救赎只能灭亡时,她的悲剧带来的震撼效果在酝酿中翻倍,读者对于小说的悲剧主题也就有了更为清醒、深刻的认识。

## 4. 对照的频率

叙事时间的维度之一——频率,是“故事中重复的次数与叙事中重复的次数的关系”(Genette,1972:35)。当二者不吻合时,往往出现单一叙述、重复叙述与概括叙述。笔者为

了分析的方便,借用省略与重复叙述对照,以形成强烈的反差,凸显主题。省略的出现,大大加快了叙事节奏,同时也为故事留白,让读者充分发挥自主性。重复叙述则强调一个事件在文本叙述中多次出现,有意吸引读者目光,使叙事节奏放慢。同时,“重复叙述就像是在音乐中使用的重音符号,起到了加重的效果,耐人寻味。”(王丹,2012:82)在有限的篇幅里,叙述者往往交错运用省略与重复,使叙事节奏松弛有度,同时又增加阅读难度,使得读者更加细致地揣摩文本,发掘主题。

在玛丽婚后十几年的生活中,笔者在前文已提到,叙述者通过大量场景描写来刻画玛丽在农场度日如年的煎熬心理,叙事时间被无限拉长。然而,在细致的场景刻画之间,叙述者运用了省略的手法,使叙事时间又适当地加快,使读者不至于在阅读过程中因为反复、详尽的描述而感到无趣。同时,这种加快了的叙事时间对于凸显主人公玛丽的心理状态也大有裨益。例如,叙述者前一刻还在描述玛丽与迪克因为佣人问题不停地爆发矛盾,紧接着却说“有一天”,阅读后文时读者发现中间有三年时光被刻意省略了。在这省略的三年时光中,玛丽与迪克无疑日复一日地在争吵,叙述者运用省略加快了叙事节奏,避免情节过于拖沓。又例如,“日子就这样一天天过下去,过了八月,又过了九月。”(莱辛,1999:158)事实上,玛丽此时因为失败的婚姻、贫穷的生活已渐渐走向崩溃,省略恰好模糊了时间概念,象征了玛丽陷入疯癫之后的精神状态,每一天都处于混混沌沌中。在摩西来当佣人之后,叙述者首先运用场景描写刻画了玛丽与摩西之间的矛盾,然后又让玛丽在摩西的不断关怀中经历艰难的思想斗争,至此叙事时间突然省略,直接跳跃至四年后的某一天,查理·斯莱特驾车看望特纳夫妇。玛丽作为白人妇女,本应恪守白人社会黑白隔离的首要准则,然而长久孤寂的生活,再加上摩西真诚的关心,使他们之间有了“人与人的关系”。省略的四年恰好是玛丽经历挣扎与撕裂,一步步背离主流价值观并走向摩西的过程。故事渐入高潮,叙述者却刻意按下不表,为读者留下大量的空白。此处叙事时间的省略伴随着一种隐匿、无法见光、不能言说的感觉,正象征着玛丽与摩西世所不容的情感。

除了省略,叙述者同样运用了极富特色的话语重复,以达到强调、突出的表现效果。在玛丽的婚后生活里,随着对婚姻生活的失望,玛丽开始回想童年与父母生活在一起的时光。通过一遍又一遍的话语重复,如“过母亲那种非过不可的生活”、“像母亲遇到这种场合时那样哭泣,带着一种庄严的牺牲者的愤怒”,甚至“像母亲一样,害不了几天病就很快死去”,读者可以感受到,玛丽的悲剧正是上一代悲剧的延续,或者说,在南非殖民地,这样的悲剧绝不鲜见。话语重复也成功地强调了玛丽的人生悲剧在她幼年时就已注定,即使结婚,也不过是对童年悲剧生活的延续。在迪克生病期间,由玛丽管理农场,叙述者共用了多达二十处表达“恨”的词语,来表现玛丽对土人的憎恨之强烈。除此之外,叙述者也用了数十处表达气愤的词语,如“怒火直冒”、“气得要命”、“气得上气不接下气”等。无论是“恨”还是“愤怒”,这些带着强烈感情的词汇本身就有强调的作用,叙述者更是借玛丽之口重复表达这些强烈的情感,所达到的效果就是让感情的表达犹如火山喷发一样强烈,而玛丽对于土人的极端憎恶也得到强化。

## 5. 结语

殖民主题一直是莱辛创作的热点,在《野草在歌唱》中也不例外。黑白隔离作为南非社会的首要准则,在迈入二十世纪以来已摇摇欲坠,然而白人农场主仍然奉行对土人进行残暴统治的原则。《野草在歌唱》描述的正是在殖民主义和种族歧视盛行的南非社会,由一名普通白人妇女的死亡折射出的平静表面下的多重矛盾,以及白人自身的精神危机,“莱辛以其敏锐的洞察力和犀利的笔触,向世人展示了殖民主义的真面目,揭示了在西方殖民主义和种族歧视重压下扭曲的人性,消解了‘白人优越论’和欧洲中心主义。”(朱振武,张秀丽,2008:97)小说通过对叙事时间的灵活运用,不仅使小说叙事节奏灵活多变、张弛有度,同时也使读者在阅读过程中积极发挥主动性,在跳跃的时间里发掘小说的悲剧主题。

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# 21世纪以来中国中长篇小说英译的现状、趋势及建议

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**摘要:**作为文学的重要分支,小说的外译状况一直是各国文学及文化“走出去”的重要缩影和借鉴。目前有关中国文学“走出去”的研究多聚焦于新中国成立后或改革开放后文学外译的一般性研究及代表性作品外译的特定性研究,忽视了新时期小说的英译发展概况。本文以21世纪中长篇中文小说的首版英译本为分析对象,运用定量的方法对三个英译中心的小说英译概况进行横、纵向对比分析,得出当下我国中长篇小说英译总体呈波动上升的趋势,我国文学外译正逐步进入国外出版社主动译入的阶段,并就目前存在的问题从译前、译中与译后三个阶段提出相应建议。

**关键词:**中国文学“走出去”,21世纪,中长篇小说,英译概况

**Abstract:** The international promotion of fictions which constitute a main branch of literature usually reflects the situation of literature and culture's “going out”. Domestic studies on it mainly focus on its general research and certain work's specific research while ignoring the general trends of Chinese fictions particularly in the new era. Thus, this paper quantitatively analyses the collected English versions first published in the 21st century via horizontal and vertical comparison among the three translation centers and concludes that Chinese fictions' “going out” is presenting a fluctuatedly improving trend and is stepping into a stage in which foreign publishing houses actively introduce Chinese fictions. For the existing problems, the co-authors make some suggestions from three stages, i. e. pre-translation, while-translation and post-translation.

**Keywords:** The “going out” of Chinese literature, 21st century, Chinese novellas and fictions, Overall situation

## 1. 引言

改革开放以来,随着文化软实力在国家综合国力中的地位日渐提高,中国文化“走出去”的紧迫性和重要性与日俱增,中国文学的译介作为其中重要一环也受到越来越多的关注。21世纪以来,除早已成功走进西方世界的部分古典文学,越来越多的现当代文学进入外国读者的视野。

近几年,尤其是2012年莫言荣膺诺奖以来,学界有关中国文学“走出去”的研究成果颇丰,不仅从宏观上探讨中国文学走出去的概况、问题、译介模式、译介渠道及传播效果等,代表学者如金介甫(2006),胡安江(2010),高方、许钧(2010),耿强(2010b),吴自选(2012),刘云虹、许钧(2014),谢天振(2013,2014),徐稳(2013),王国礼(2014),王颖冲(2014,2015),方梦之(2016)等,而且从微观上分析特定作品、特定作家作品及特定译者译作的外译状况和启示,代表学者有左苗苗(2008),耿强(2010a),刘江凯(2011),胡安江(2012),姚钰媛(2013),王敏(2013),吴赟(2013),鲍晓英(2014a,2014b)等。然而,纵观以上研究,笔者发现学界偏好中国文学“走出去”的一般性研究和代表性作品外译的特定性研究,鲜少关注文学分项如小说、散文等的外译概貌研究,而为数不多的小说外译概貌研究中,学者的研究时间点多为新中国成立后和改革开放后,研究对象多为小说走向海外的定性研究,在当今文学外译飞速发展的背景下,加之我国外译文学输出语种近50%为英语(魏清光,2015)的形势,现有小说外译概况研究不免缺乏一定的时效性。

针对以上问题,本文运用定量研究与定性研究相结合的方法对21世纪初我国中长篇小说英译概况展开研究。笔者搜集整理了2000至2016年(7月)首版的中长篇小说英译本,并按时间和地域进行分类。地域上呈现三个英译中心:(1)以纽约为主的美国;(2)以伦敦为主的英国;(3)以北京、上海和香港为主的中国。此外,还有少量来自澳大利亚、新加坡、加拿大、德国等。针对这三个英译中心,本文分两部分展开研究,第一部分主要从横向和纵向对三个中心的英译情况进行实证对比分析,总结当下我国中长篇小说英译的现状和趋势;第二部分则在第一部分的基础上为我国文学“走出去”提出针对性建议。

## 2. 我国中长篇小说英译的现状和趋势

### 2.1 三个中心小说英译情况的横向对比分析

通过网络渠道和文献查阅<sup>①</sup>,笔者总共搜集了199<sup>②</sup>部2000至2016年(7月)首版的中文中长篇小说英译本,根据作者、作品、出版时间、译者、译本出版社、译本首版时间、小说主题、被禁情况等八个类目制成总表,并将三个英译中心的主要信息整合成下表(见表1)。

表1 三个英译中心小说英译对比表

	美国	英国	中国	其他(他国+未知国及电子发布)
英译本出版量(部)	104	44	39	12
主要出版社(按数量排)	NY:Columbia UP NY:Pantheon NY:Harper Collins NY:Grove Press NY:Arcade Publishing	London:Penguin London: Chatto&Windus London:Balestier London: Harvill Secker	北京:北京青涩传媒有限公司 上海:上海新闻出版发展公司 香港:Make-Do Publishing 北京:外文出版社	他国(5部): Berlin:Sternberg Press Sydney:Giramondo Singapore:Ethos Books Singapore:Math Paper Press 未知国及电子发布(7部): Rinchen Books Dog Ear Publishing Tri-Quarterly Ethnic ChinaLit Daylight Publishing House The White Review
主要译者	Howard Goldblatt Nicky Harman Carlos Rojas Esther Tyldesley	Nicky Harman Howard Goldblat Flora Drew Julia Lovell	Holger Nahm Brian Holton Harvey Thomlinson Yawtsong Lee	Shelly Bryant Jeremy Tiang Bruce Humes
主要主题	女性、“文革”、性爱、苦难人生、人性丑恶	女性、情感、推理、苦难生活、儿童	科幻、推理、情感、人性丑恶、儿童	情感、科幻、“文革”、个人苦难
小说被英译出版最多的中国作家	苏童、莫言、余华、薛欣然、刘震云、阎连科、残雪	马建、何家弘、虹影、郭小橹、师琼瑜、严歌苓、张爱玲	刘慈欣、何家弘、雷米、慕容雪村	张悦然、林哲、胡昉、范稳、叶辛、罗隆翔
禁书数量	11	4	0	0
特殊年份	少:2002 多:2009,2015	多:2012,2015	多:2010,2012	多:2010

根据表1,不难发现,对于我国中长篇小说的译介,三个英译中心表现各异,分别归纳如下。

从英译本出版量来看,美国出版量高达104部,占总数的一半以上,英国次之,中国最少,还有5部来自新加坡、德国、加拿大、澳大利亚等国。这表明,21世纪以来,我国高达74%的中长篇小说由欧美等国主动引入,而仅五分之一左右由中国出版社主动外推,这与王颖冲(2014:79)所持观点——“英译的中文小说中,很大一部分是由中国主动外推的,基本由外文出版社负责”——不一致。这表明,随着跨文化交流的不断深入,欧美等国对我国中长篇小说的引进力度和接受度不断提高。虽然目前美国译入我国中长篇小说的年平均数量仍未摆脱“3%怪圈”<sup>①</sup>,但其出版总量远高于英国和中国,这一方面表明美国市场对中国优秀作

品的需求度较大,另一方面也提醒我们,在继续拓宽美国市场的同时应兼顾欧洲市场的开拓。

从主要出版社来看,表1中三个中心的主要出版社多为商业出版社,且多对中国文学兴趣浓厚。Pantheon Press、Harper Collins与Grove Press均为美国著名的商业出版社,它们凭着高度的文学敏感性,出版了许多大众喜爱的文学作品;尤其是Grove Press,在1989年出版了张洁的《沉重的翅膀》,一夜风靡,此后不断加大中国当代文学的出版力度,其目的虽纯属商业性,但出版数量之多,质量之高,大大推进了我国小说的“走出去”战略。英译最多的哥伦比亚大学出版社(Columbia UP)则为大学出版社,虽坐拥全球著名的美国智库——布鲁金斯学会,云集了以鲍大可(A. Doak Barnett)、黎安友(Andrew J. Nathan)等为代表的全美一流的汉学研究专家,对中国文学及文化的研究深入、权威,但英译总量仍逊于商业出版社出版总量。英国的四家出版社皆为商业出版社,均热切关注当代亚洲文学的动态。其中独占鳌头的企鹅(Penguin)出版社是目前全球最大的大众图书出版商之一,其对中国文学的关注度持续上升,目前已在北京设立分部,以出版更多优秀的中国文学作品。中国的四家出版社中,香港的Make-Do Publishing和北京的外文出版社长年致力于中国文学作品的译出,上海新闻出版发展公司为政府直属机构,出版内容受制于政府要求。而成立于2010年的北京青涩传媒有限公司在2012、2013年出版刘慈欣和雷米的小说英译本走红后,却因企业内部问题逐渐淡出。不难看出,欧美商业出版社以其对广大读者群喜好的准确把握,渐渐赶超了大学出版社和专门研究机构。这表明未来很长一段时间内,商业出版社将成为中国文学“走出去”的主要力量,同时中国民间商业出版社的加入也将是外译发展的必然趋势。

从主要译者来看,三个中心的主要译者虽不相同,但皆以英语为母语,且同时具备“中国经历、中文天赋、中学底蕴及中国情谊”(刘云虹,许钧,2014:8),尤其是葛浩文(Howard Goldblatt),作为一位名声斐然的汉学家,他被著名批评家夏志清教授誉为中国现当代文学的“首席翻译家”,也被赞为“中国文学的情人”,这不仅是对他的充分肯定,更是对国外汉学家充当中国文学及文化“接生婆”的充分认同。

从主要主题来看,三个中心的倾向主题大不相同,美国偏好女性、“文革”、性爱、苦难人生和人性丑恶等主题,倾向于揭露社会的黑暗面,披露人性的丑恶,偏反思类、严肃类文学;英国的焦点多落在女性、情感、推理、苦难生活及儿童等主题上,强调对现实的刻画和对儿童的教育,偏现实类、教育类文学;中国的主题则倾向于科幻、推理、情感、人性及儿童等,强调小说的故事性,偏休闲类、娱乐类文学。综合来说,欧美等国倾向于对女性进行浓墨重彩地描绘和对社会黑暗面进行揭露,以激发读者反思,而中国出版的作品的娱乐倾向与之不符,“走出去”的效果自然减弱。

从小说被英译出版最多的中国作家来看,三个中心偏爱的中国作家截然不同。美国出版作品最多的中国作家中,苏童、莫言、余华和刘震云均为国内一流的严肃文学大师,薛欣然以描写当代中国女性闻名,阎连科的作品多因涉及社会敏感话题被禁;英国偏爱的作家中,何家弘擅用刑事推理揭露社会黑暗,马建和虹影的作品因情色描写且触及社会敏感领域,在国内备受争议,而郭小橹、师琼瑜、严歌苓、张爱玲则均擅长书写女性故事,七位作家中,五位为擅长刻画女性的女性,英国对女性主题的偏爱可见一斑;中国英译出版最多的作家中,刘慈欣以科幻小说闻名,雷米与何家弘擅长推理小说,慕容雪村好揭露人性丑恶。这一对比表

明,欧美读者偏好揭露社会黑暗面的严肃文学作家及国内备受争议的作家。

从禁书数量来看,美国最多,英国次之,中国无禁书译出。这与三个中心偏好的主题和作家相一致。笔者发现:作品越揭露社会黑暗面,作家及其作品在国内越受争议,其海外接受度越高。这表明中国禁书在欧美各国广受欢迎,甚至已成为众多作品海外宣传的噱头。

从特殊年份来看,三个中心每年的中文小说英译数量和倾向也大相径庭。基于对比的形象性和可信度考虑,笔者汇总了三个英译中心及其他出版国每年的出版数量,并制成下图(见图1)。鉴于2016年全年的英译总量还未确定,暂不列入分析范畴。

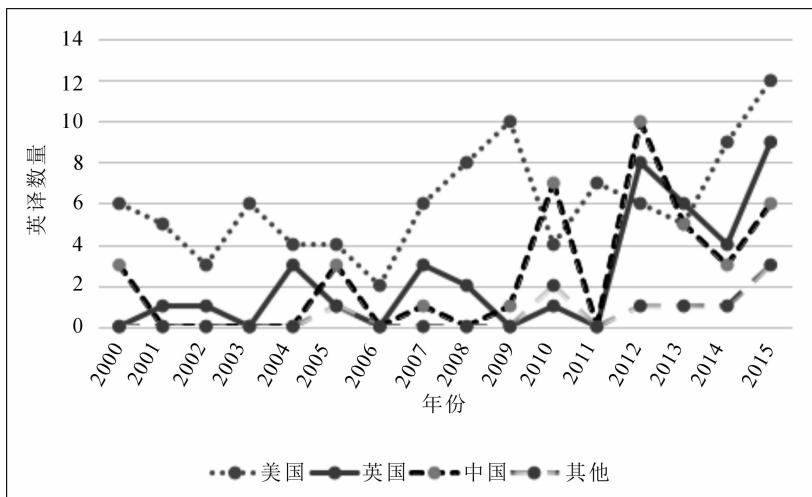


图1 三个中心及其他出版国2000—2015年英译本数量走向对比

由图1可知,2000—2015年,美国对我国中长篇小说的译入从未间断,英译数量总体呈波动上升趋势。这说明,美国对我国中长篇小说的需求将不断增加,且会更加主动地译入。然而,2002年美国译入数量突减,而2009年和2015年译入数量剧增。笔者推测,2001年的中美撞机事件<sup>⑤</sup>致使双方外交关系一度转冷,文化交流也因此受阻。而2002年,随着两国首脑成功互访,两国外交恢复正常,一定程度上推动了2003年小说英译的回暖。就2009年和2015年的繁荣而言,笔者推测,一方面,2008年北京奥运会这一绝佳的交流契机与2014年第三次汉学家文学翻译国际研讨会这一交流平台,促进了英译的中文小说在数量上有所增加,在质量方面显著提高,且内容涉及面更广;另一方面,奥巴马在任期间的两次访华(2009年和2014年),在某种程度上推动了中美经济、政治及文化方面的交流。由此推测,美国英译中文小说的数量在一定程度上受制于两国的外交关系和交流程度。

美国对中文小说的译入从未间断,而英国的译入则表现为两个阶段。第一阶段为2000—2011年,每年中文小说英译量介于0和3部之间,这可能源于英国对翻译不重视;著名翻译家蓝诗玲(Julia Lovell)在第一次汉学家文学翻译国际研讨会上曾表示,“伦敦大学看不起翻译……我在翻译时一直有非常大的心理压力”(蓝诗玲,2010)。第二阶段为2012—2015年,英译数量陡增,尤其是2012与2015年,英译数量分别高达8部和9部;笔者推测,2011年和2014年我国总理访英,为中英文化交流营造了一个和平、稳定的环境,加之近些年我国在英国兴办孔子学院,数量高居欧洲之首,为我国小说的英译减少了语言障碍,因此有效缓解了“语言差”(谢天振,2013:309)的问题。

与英国相似,中国小说英译的走向也呈现两个阶段。第一阶段为2000—2009年,每年英译数量屈指可数,这可能因为我国为推动中国文学“走出去”而创办的《中国文学》杂志、“熊猫丛书”及“大中华文库”相继碰壁,并停刊或停止出版,严重打击了国内译者和出版社的信心,小说英译状况持续低迷。第二阶段为2010—2015年,这一阶段英译数量明显增加,最突出的是2010年与2012年,尤其是2010年的数量从2009年的1部陡升至7部,这在很大程度上受益于当年国务院新闻办公室推出的“中国文化著作翻译出版工程”,以及中国作协主办的第一次汉学家文学翻译国际研讨会。前者致力于对文化、文学、科技等领域进行资助,为中国文学“走出去”提供了雄厚的资金支持;后者以“中国文学翻译的经验与建议”为主题,探讨当代中国文学翻译的现状与经验等话题,不仅重新引起了国外汉学家对中国文学的兴趣和重视,也大大激发了国内外译者的翻译热情和信心,为国内外翻译家提供了新思路与新导向。长期从事中国文学英译及对外传播领导工作的原中国文学出版社副总编王明杰表示,“参加这个会议真的是倍受鼓舞,中国文学外译前景,在没有参加会议之前我是非常悲观的,参加这个会议之后我有点想法”(王明杰,2010)。而2012年,仅科幻作家刘慈欣的英译小说就达到8种,笔者推测,2012年的末日传说引起了全世界对灾难文学和科幻文学前所未有的关注,刘慈欣的小说正好迎合了这一潮流,被Holger Nahm推向了世界。

综合三个中心的历时对比,不难得出,三个中心中文小说的英译走向总体呈波动上升的趋势,但囿于国际大背景、国际外交关系及对翻译的重视程度等因素,我国中长篇小说的英译走向还不够稳定,“走出去”的形势不容乐观。

## 2.2 小说英译整体情况纵向对比分析

除从以上七个方面对三个中心英译情况进行横向对比分析外,笔者还纵向对比分析了小说汇总表,总结出当下我国中长篇小说英译的现状和发展态势。

出版社方面,21世纪以来,国外出版的中文中长篇小说译本数量高达总数的五分之四。这表明,我们正逐渐走出由国家创办《中国文学》杂志、“熊猫丛书”及“大中华文库”等推动中国文学走出去的主动外推阶段,逐渐进入国外出版社引入我国优秀中长篇小说的主动译入阶段,国外出版社将在未来很长一段时间内成为我国文学外译的主导力量,这也是当下我国文学“走出去”的必然选择。

原作出版年代方面,199部作品中,绝大部分小说的中文版首版于20世纪80年代以后,这表明,我国20世纪80年代以后首版的中长篇小说倍受国外读者喜爱,而1949—1980年间出版的作品则多被学者视作社会学材料,他们觉得“通过小说来研究中国比通过纯粹的社会学材料更加真实”(李兮言,2013)。换言之,1949—1980年出版的作品重在认知价值,而1980年以后的作品则以文学价值和商业价值见长。卫慧、徐则成、徐磊等现代通俗文学作家的作品相继外译,恰恰表明文学价值和商业价值将在未来很长一段时间内成为外译小说的主要选择标准之一。

译者方面,199部作品中,译作数量排名前五的译者分别为葛浩文、Nicky Harman、Holger Nahm、Flora Drew以及Carlos Rojas。这五位译者不仅精通中外语言及文化,而且与作者长期保持联系。表1中葛浩文翻译的30部作品中,有莫言7部、苏童3部、毕飞宇3部、刘震云3部。莫言在某访谈中曾表示,他在与葛浩文相识的这些年里,通信100多封,还

有不计其数的邮件联系和电话联系,可见葛浩文与作家联系之频繁,情谊之深。Flora Drew 作为马建的妻子,其译介的 4 部作品为马建赢得了英国托马斯奖。Carlos Rojas 译介的 4 部作品中有 3 部为阎连科的禁书,很大程度上将其推上中国首位卡夫卡奖获得者之位。这些译者与作家保持着长期交流和联系,因而能最准确地翻译他们的作品。这意味着中国作家与国外汉学家或翻译家建立长期友好合作关系是未来我国小说“走出去”的重要选择。

### 3. 中国文学英译的建议和对策

综合以上横、纵对比分析不难发现,虽然近些年我国中长篇小说的英译态势总体呈波动上升趋势,海外传播也在原有基础上大大加强,但整体形势并不容乐观。2013 年,刘江凯在接受《时代周报》访谈时表示,中国文学“在整体格局上仍处于很边缘的角色……在欧美市场,不要说当代文学,就是整个中国文学都仍旧处于边缘位置”(同上)。2014 年,葛浩文在华东师范大学举办的“镜中之镜:中国当代文学及其译介研讨会”上明确指出,“中国小说如同韩国小说,在西方并不特别受欢迎”(葛浩文,2014)。我国小说的英译之路依然曲折而漫长,小说“走出去”需要各领域学者共同探索和努力。结合本文的统计数据及发现的问题,笔者将从小说译前、译中和译后三个阶段分别提出建议,希望对我国小说及文学“走出去”有所帮助。

译前阶段,作家的主角地位不可撼动。葛浩文在该研讨会上表示:“中国文学走出去有两个要素:作家与其作品;翻译。”他还指出,“如果中国小说构思写作严谨又具国际性,相信绝对可以走出去……小说要好看,才有人买”(同上)。因此,作家在创作时既要确保作品的高质量,又要兼顾目标语读者的喜好和市场需求。这就要求作家具备丰富的阅历、深刻的理解和创新的想法。事实上,随着中国文学“走出去”的要求日益强烈,我国作家对作品质量和创新的关注度日渐提高,莫言、曹文轩、刘慈欣等作家相继海外获奖便是明证。但国外读者的喜好和市场需求仍是众多作家的创作盲区,著名作家毕飞宇在该研讨会上坦言,“写作时,如果还考虑海外发行、进入其他语种等问题,这是不堪重负的事情”(石剑锋,2014)。作家阎连科也表示,“书翻译出去,最大好处是,在国外,我的翻译可以做我的导游。书翻译得好不好,卖得好不好,只要稿费足够我们来玩”(同上)。这反映出,目前我国多数作家创作时倾向于关起房门咬笔杆,无视房外人的生活环境、历史背景和真正需求,打开房门走出去时却往往只扮演游客和消费者的角色。难怪葛浩文先生批评多数中国作家只是“人的身体出了国,但是其他种种(语言、心态)还是留在中国”,最终导致“中国当代文学缺少国际性,没有宏伟的世界观”(葛浩文,2014),无法满足国外市场的需求。目前我国政府在各国兴办孔子学院,不断加强汉语的海外推广工作,以减少海外读者学习中国文化的障碍,却忽略了本土作家英语知识匮乏的现状。拓宽国际视野,增强作品的国际性,已成为当下中国作家急需填补的漏洞。因此,要想我国作品成功“走出去”,国内作家不仅需要努力提高自身的写作水平和思想深度,而且要深入学习英语文学和文化,尽量满足英语国家读者对作品文学价值和商业价值的追求,从而提高作品的国际性和影响力,最大限度地融入国外市场。

译中阶段,译者的选择与培养至关重要。前文数据表明,以译入语为母语且精通中国文化的译者在小说成功“走出去”中扮演着重要角色。但由于文化的固有差异,国外译者往往

无法精准地把握我国小说的文化内涵,因此,业界包括谢天振(2014),高方、许钧(2010)等在内的学者均鼓励国外译者与中国译者“中西合璧式”地协作,赞同将国外译者作为中国文化“走出去”的主导力量。但笔者认为,长期将希望投注于国外译者不仅易引起因文化差异导致的小说误译现象,还会使中国小说及文学“走出去”更为被动,培养高水平的本土译者在当下更为紧迫。目前,国内对英语学习的重视与日俱增,英语入门学习的时间从初中调到了小学,甚至幼儿园,高校的翻译硕士点和博士点也不断增加,会英语、懂英语的人才越来越多,但高水平的翻译人才并未随之增加。《浙江日报》曾刊文——《文化走出去不差钱差翻译》(文敏,2010);《人民日报海外版》也曾表示,“中国图书在国际市场上表现不佳,除了受到中西文化差异的限制,深层次的原因是人才问题,特别是高水平中译外人才的匮乏”(孟晓光,2010)。这一方面是由于文学翻译“在汉学界属于手工活”(蓝诗玲,2010),多数英语学习者仅将其视为出国和就业的辅助工具,学习的主动性、持久性、深入性和专业性均不容乐观;另一方面,高校多把学校的升学率和就业率放在首位,缺乏深刻的纯文学翻译指导。因此,要想培养出高水平的翻译人才,首先是国家应重视翻译人才,为其提供经济支持、政策支持和精神支持,让译者能够后顾无忧地投身文学翻译事业。其次,学校应对翻译专业进行阶段化和细致化教学,即学生应经历基础理论学习、相关学科学习和专业强化学习三个阶段,其中相关学科包括心理学、逻辑学、哲学、新闻学等,这有助于学生拓宽学习广度。而在专业强化学习阶段,教师应将文学翻译细化,从修辞学、文体学、文化学等方面强化学生的文化理解能力与翻译能力,培养专业型的文学翻译人才,为我国文学及文化“走出去”提供人才保障。

译后阶段,要充分发挥作者、评论家及民间出版机构的宣传作用,创新出版形式,借助多媒体力量。通常,译者和出版社会对译作进行宣传。近几年,我国政府也不断采取各种推动措施,但魏清光(2015)对1980—1989年、1996—2003年、2004—2011年三个阶段的文学外译总数的对比分析表明,政策助推的成效非常有限,我国作品仍被遗忘在海外书店的角落,而小说作者往往对此不闻不问。如前所述,毕飞宇主张作家一心写作,不考虑小说的海外发行;阎连科更关注出版费用是否足够海外旅游,而即使去海外宣传作品,全程也“必须完全仰赖口译的协助”(葛浩文,2014),与当地读者直接接触的机会少之又少,宣传的受众往往局限于少数研究中国文化的学者,并未真正意义上提高作品的海外知名度。相反,一些兼通英、汉双语的华裔作家,如高行健、严歌苓、马建、薛欣然、虹影等,在海外的影响力和知名度甚至高于莫言、苏童等国内一流作家。中国作家在译本海外推广中的普遍缺席很大程度上削弱了我国小说的海外影响力,减缓了我国小说及文学“走出去”的进程。因此,笔者建议,我国作家应提高对作品“走出去”后的关注度,积极主动地参与国内外的翻译研讨会和作品宣传会,深入国外的读者群。其次,评论家的桥梁作用不可小视,“评论的水平很容易左右读者的阅读趋向”(陈平原,1998:57)。著名中国文学评论家夏志清对张爱玲、沈从文和钱钟书等人作品的肯定,在当时可谓石破天惊,引起国内外文学界的不小震动。美国当代著名小说家厄普代克曾在《纽约客》发文《苦竹:两部中国小说》,评价苏童的《我的帝王生涯》和莫言的《丰乳肥臀》,虽然评价“非常狭隘”(葛浩文,2014),但某种程度上也增加了作品的知名度,激发了更多的读者阅读。因此,作者或相关部门应主动邀请著名评论家为小说的英译本撰写书评,吸引广大学者及普通读者的关注,为中国文学“走出去”搭好桥梁。此外,如前文所述,民间出版机构的加入和数字出版将是大势所趋,因此,出版机构一方面应设立文化“走出去”的

专门管理部门,深入国际文学市场,了解文学发展态势,为关起房门咬笔杆的国内作家提供最新的文学动态;另一方面也应顺应信息时代的趋势,“充分发展数字出版业务,实现由传统的纸质出版向数字出版、单一媒体出版向多媒体出版、书店营销向网络付费共享的转变”(魏清光,2015:158)。不久前,亚马逊跨文化出版事业部与中国对外翻译与传播研究中心暨中国文化译研网(CCTSS)联合启动了“CCTSS-亚马逊”中国当代文学精品翻译合作项目,旨在遴选出最适合海外读者阅读习惯的中国文学精品,并通过Kindle一站式电子书管理平台,上传至美国亚马逊Kindle电子书店。此外,各类中文学习网站如Paper Republic、Modern Chinese Literature and Culture(MCLC)、My Chinese Books等不断兴起,也为国内外学者和读者提供了走近中国文化的平台。这表明,“中国文学应借助电子平台‘走出去’”(李高超,2016),数字出版是我国文学“走出去”的必然选择。

## 4. 结语

中国文学“走出去”是国际文化交流的需要,也是历史发展的必然趋势,而中长篇小说作为文学的一大分项,也作为生活休闲和社会认知的重要成分,其“走出去”的进程也必然不断加快。然而,不可否认的是,当下中国中长篇小说及文学在世界文学之林仍然并将长期处于边缘位置。因此,在欣喜于当下文学外译态势上升的同时,我们也要对目前存在的问题对症下药,及时寻找有效途径,采取可行措施。笔者认为,作者、译者、评论家及民间出版机构在中国文学及文化“走出去”的过程中应充分发挥其先锋、桥梁作用,消除误解,缓和矛盾,促进沟通,推动中国文学以最完美的姿态走向世界,走进世界文学之林的内核。

注释:

- ①本文汇总表的数据主要来源于Paper Republic、MCLC、My Chinese Books官网及文献阅读所得。
- ②笔者总共搜集作品198部,由于麦家的《解密》英译本在美国和英国同时出版,算作两部,故搜集到英译本数量总计199部。
- ③“少”指当年的英译本数量相对他年骤减;“多”指当年的英译本数量相对他年剧增。
- ④3%怪圈:著名学者刘江凯在接受《时代周报》访问时曾指出,美国每年翻译作品数量均低于其作品年出版量的3%。
- ⑤中美撞机事件:2001年4月,美国军用侦察机违规撞击中国侦察机,并擅停海南岛,严重侵犯了我国的领土安全,双方外交关系一度转冷。

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# **Self-Regulated Learning in Classroom Interaction in a Summer English Programme<sup>①</sup>**

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**Abstract:** The study examined how Chinese non-English majors engaged in classroom interaction with their native English teacher and their peers and how they negotiated meaning to reach successful communication through scaffolding in a summer intensive English program in a key university in China. Sixteen Chinese non-English majors and one native English speaker were observed in three tasks: a decision-making task, an information gap task between the students and an interview task between the teacher and the students. The findings showed that the students initiated more to signal problems when communicating with their peers than with the native teacher when confronting communication breakdowns. In the peer interaction, 163 scaffolding episodes within 7 categories were identified with Feedback(25.77%) as the most frequent category. Through their peers' scaffolding, the students were able to self-regulate their discourse. Both the more proficient and less proficient learners were able to and willingly to offer assistance to each other, however, sometimes produce incorrect output. They may also fail to scaffold the peers because of their limited L2 knowledge. In the teacher-student interaction, 284 scaffolding episodes of 8 kinds were identified with Recruitment(29.58%) as the most frequent category. The teacher scaffolded the students by demonstrating, simplifying the task and then gave positive feedback and interpretively summarized the students' answer. The teacher's scaffolding triggered more ideas and utterances from the students. Although the program was communication-oriented, the teacher drew the students' attention to the form as the students paid more attention to their language form and were able to self-regulate their utterance most of the time.

**Keywords:** Peer interaction, Self-regulated learning, Scaffolding, Teacher-student interaction

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## 1. Introduction

As an essential feature in communicative language teaching, group work was proved to be beneficial to learners in various ways by many scholars. Interaction in small group work will offer learners more opportunities to speak, to negotiate meaning and content, and to construct discourse collaboratively. A lot of studies on interaction have compared the interaction of learners in group work and that in a teacher-fronted setting; results showed that group work can lead to more negotiation of meaning. Other studies have proved that participant variables like sexes and proficiency levels can affect the learners' interaction; it is suggested that mixed gender and mixed proficiency pairs maybe the best for group work composition (Ellis, 1994).

Previous studies suggested that learners were able to assist each other in their interaction using various strategies. Pica, et al. (1996) investigated if learners' needs of L2 learning can be addressed through learner-learner interaction like the learner-native speaker interaction do. They compared the interaction of five dyads of English L2 learners to that of five dyads of English L2 learners and native speakers from the perspectives of modified input, feedback and output. Their results suggested that the interaction between learners can address some of the learner needs but it provides less modified input and feedback than the interaction with native speakers. Another empirical study of LI (2012) investigating student-

student interaction in a Hong Kong EFL class suggested that learners can assist each other in peer interaction to complete their communication, but this cannot lead to successful learning of the appropriate form, thus there is still a role for teachers in group work.

Scaffolding is an important way for learners to reach self-regulated learning. In 1980s, James Lantolf advocated the sociocultural theory and it has now been widely used in classroom teaching and learning (Matchell & Myles, 2004). According to the sociocultural theory, learning happens through the interaction between the novices (children, learners) and the experts (parents, teachers), and the novices can gradually progress from other-regulation to self-regulation. There is a distance between the learner's actual level and the potential level of development, which is referred to as the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Self-regulation is regarded as a goal in the Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf & Appel, 1994), and scaffolding is a bridge for learners to reach the goal during the interaction. Most studies search on scaffolding found it as can offer modified input to learners and encourage more target-like output and encourage learners to explore language and reach self-regulation. Scaffolding has received great attention in recent years, but few studies have examined how students receive scaffolding when interacting with their peers and when they interacting with the native English speaker to have a full picture of students' interactional process and its role in SLA. Besides, most studies focused on the

teacher's scaffolding while neglecting the fact that peer interaction also played an important role in students' language development. Thus a comprehensive analysis of native speakers' and non-native speakers', teacher's and peers' scaffol-

ding in communication should be examined. More importantly, a natural classroom setting other than a laboratory setting should be emphasized, so that the research can be applied to classroom teaching.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

Sixteen adult EFL learners and one native English teacher participated in the study. The students were all non-English majors with an average age of 20 and they have studied English for about seven years. They were all first-year students in Wuhan University (8 females and 8 males). The teacher was a native speaker of English from a university in the US who is quite experienced in English as a second and foreign language teaching. The teacher held a PhD in linguistics and is an associate professor. She often encouraged students to actively participate in all kinds of communicative activities like debate, decision-making tasks and other oral tasks in group work.

All participants came from the Wuhan University International Summer Intensive English Program. The program was jointly held by Wuhan University and Ohio State University. It aimed to improve students' oral English and to develop the undergraduates' ability to communicate effectively. Such an intensive setting was quite different from students' normal English classroom in China as it could offer students more opportunities to communicate in English both with the native speaker and with their peers. The students also showed willingness to

communicate in English with each other after the class.

### 2.2 The tasks

The students' interaction in three tasks were observed in this study: The first task was a decision-making task requiring the students to imagine themselves as a travel agency and they need to make out a travel plan for their customer. It took two classes to finish this task. The students were required to decide their travel places, their routes and scenery spots to visit. They were also required to figure out details like hotels, food, time, etc. This task is quite close to real life, and the students were divided to work in groups of three.

The second one was an information gap task. The students worked in pairs and each pair was given two pictures that looked quite similar but with several differences. Without showing each other their own version, the students have to work together to find out the differences in their pictures. Those tasks were all done in the normal class period with the tasks presented as part of the normal class routine. These two tasks were all meaning-focused, requiring the students to exchange information and make a conclusion.

The third task was an interview between the students and the native teacher. The teacher and the researcher worked together as interviewers to interview individual students (averagely 17minutes for each). The interview was more like a normal conversation concerning the student's own experience in English learning. The interviews were done during the break at noon. This task was observed to examine the interaction between the students and the teacher to see how the students interact with the native speaker.

### 2.3 Data collection and analysis

4.5 hours of interaction were collected (eleven videotaped sessions) with two hours for S-S interaction (altogether 8 students) and two and half hours for T-S interaction (altogether 8 students). Specifically, for S-S interaction, one group of three students (2 females and 1 male) and another group of three students (2 females and 1 male) were observed in the decision-making task and one dyad (1 female and 1 male) were observed in the information gap task. They were all randomly chosen during the group work tasks in the class. For task one, 40 minutes of recordings were collected in the first day and 32 minutes in the second day. And 48 minutes of recording were collected for the second task. Thus altogether 2 hours of recording were collected for S-S interaction. For T-S interaction another 8 students (3 females and 5 males) and one native English teacher were observed. An average of 17 minutes for 8 interviewee was recorded which accounts for two and half hours.

The discourse data were firstly transcribed and analyzed. Non-verbal communication is also transcribed since it is used as an important strategy by the speaker. The researcher went through all video clips for three times and got the final transcription. For data analysis, the researcher first identified all episodes of scaffolding in both S-S and T-S interaction. In communication, both the teacher and the students were able to offer supportive interaction when a student may not be able to participate or continue in the conversation. Those supportive interaction in the conversation were then classified as the scaffolding episodes. Integrating previous classification of scaffolding categories and empirical results of some recent research (Gallimore & Tharp, 1990; Wood, Bruner & Ross, 1976; Roehler & Cantlon, 1997; LI, 2012) and basing on the data collected in the present study, the author identified nine kinds of scaffolding strategies as coding category: Recruitment(R), Simplifying the task (S), Direction Maintenance (DM), Frustration Control(FC), Demonstration(D), Feedback(F), Providing a word or an idea(P), Offering Explanation(OE), and Interpretive Summary(IS). After all scaffolding episodes were identified, the frequency of each scaffolding function in both interaction was quantified separately. Inter-rater reliability was checked for all transcriptions by inviting another rater to check over all coding episodes of scaffolding. The researcher and the additional rater reached 90% agreement. Disagreements were solved by reviewing the definition and exemplification of each scaffolding function and discussion. Those sca-

folding functions may occur singly or be embedded in others. Some prominent functions

were picked out in both interaction and analyzed for further discussion.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Quantitative results

In peer interaction, the students were able to facilitate each other to help move the conversation on. They negotiated meaning by using confirmation check, comprehension check and clarification to make sure they understand each other. The native teacher also used confirmation and comprehension check to make sure the students carry on with her. The students used a lot of strategies to negotiate meaning and scaffold their peers in

communication. The scaffolding comes from the more proficient students as well as less proficient students. In S-S interaction, a total number of 163 scaffolding episodes were identified. When interacting with peers, the students tend to use Recruitment (R), Simplifying the task (S), Direction Maintenance (DM), Frustration Control (FC), Demonstration (D), Feedback (F), Providing a word or an idea (P). Specific data of number and percentage of each scaffolding category in S-S interaction are listed in Tab. 1.

Tab. 1 Scaffolding category in S-S interaction

Scaffolding category	Group1	Group2	Group3	Percentage
Recruitment (R)	21	8	11	(40/163)24.53%
Simplifying the task(S)	0	0	8	(8/163)4.91%
Direction Maintenance (DM)	17	14	4	(35/163)21.47%
Demonstration(D)	4	1	1	(6/163)3.68%
Frustration Control(FC)	3	1	2	(6/163)3.68%
Providing a word or an idea(P)	15	10	1	(26/163)15.95%
Feedback(F)	17	15	10	(42/163)25.77%

As shown in Tab. 1, in peer interaction the most frequent scaffolding category is Feedback (25.77%). Some other frequent scaffolding categories are Recruitment (24.53%), Direction Maintenance (21.47%), Providing a word or an idea (15.95%). The students also scaffolded each other by simplifying the task, using demonstration and controlling frustration. In each group work,

the students offered feedback to their peers and tried to recruit their peers' engagement in the task. Those scaffolding came both from more proficient and less proficient learners. The frequency of each scaffolding category also can reflect the nature of different tasks. Group 1 and Group 2 were engaged in the decision-making task trying to make a travel plan, so the students have to

recruit their peers' engagement in making out the plan together and they have to provide ideas or words to keep their plan moving. Since the question is open-ended and they may float from their goal, they have to maintain the direction frequently. While Group 3 was engaged in the information gap task, they have to reach a conclusion about the differences in their pictures. They also tried to simplify the task frequently except other scaffolding categories.

**Tab. 2 Scaffolding category in T-S interaction**

Scaffolding Category	Percentage
Recruitment (R)	(84/284) 29. 58%
Simplifying the task (S)	(42/284) 14. 79%
Demonstration (D)	(21/284) 7. 40%
Direction Maintenance (DM)	(17/284) 5. 98%
Offering Explanation (OE)	(8/284) 2. 82%
Providing a word or an idea (P)	(3/284) 1. 05%
Interpretive summary (IS)	(40/284) 14. 08%
Feedback (F)	(69/284) 24. 29%

Tab. 2 presents the number and percentage of each scaffolding category in T-S interaction. In T-S interaction, a total number of 284 scaffolding episodes belonging to 8 kinds were identified. The most frequent scaffolding category is Recruitment (29. 58%), with Feedback(24. 29%), Simplifying the task (14. 79%), Interpretive Summary (14. 08%), Demonstration (7. 40%), Direction Maintenance(5. 98%), Offering Explanation (2. 82%) and Providing a word (1. 05%) in a descending order. The teacher scaffolded the students by recruiting their interest and in doing so the teacher used demonstrations to simplify the task; those

three functions sometimes appeared together. Another prominent figure is that the teacher used a lot of interpretive summary to scaffold the students. After the students' utterance, the teacher tends to summarize the students' ideas to confirm. In all, we can see that the students received scaffolding both from the teacher and their peers. Both the more and the less proficient learners were able and willingly to offer facilitating help to their peers. The teacher was very good at recruiting the students' interest and used demonstrations to simplify the task and guide the students to think more and speak more.

### 3.2 Discourse analysis

#### 3.2.1 Scaffolding in negotiation of meaning in S-S interaction

To have a better picture of how the students received help from their peers' and the native English teacher's scaffolding, qualitative analysis within the original context is rather important. The following parts are a typical analysis of the students' scaffolding at the lexical, content and at the both levels.

Example 1 Negotiating meaning at the lexical level(Group 2)

94 Lily: Yes. Uh, Dali, so ... Dali, the first day in Dali where... (R,DM)

95 Dara: The first day, we, we umm, Erhai, Erhai lake. (P)

96 Lily: Erhai. (F)

97 Sandy: What, isn't it a sea?

98 Dara: It's a lake; it's not a sea. (F)

99 Lily: How to get to the Erhai Lake? How to get there? (DM)

100 Dara: Take a bus. We will take, we will, umm... 游轮、游轮(yacht). (P)

101 Lily: Travel, travel ship. (P)

102 Dara: First we take a bus to get there, and then we by a ship. No, it's not the ... (DM)

103 Sandy: Ship, visiting ship. (P)

104 Dara: Visiting ship, on the ship, um, we can see the lake, and then Bai, Bai tripe, traip, they will, we can watch their performance; they are singing and dancing. (DM)

The students (Lily, Dara, Sandy) were discussing their schedule in Dali. In Line 94, Lily tried to arouse the other students' attention and invited them to voice their opinion by asking where they will go in Dali on the first day. Dara provided an idea in Line 95 before Lily finished her lines. In Dara's answer, she first repeated Lily's words "the first day" and then repeated "we" to gain time to think. The place came out before she could organize her sentence and she first gave the Chinese and then translated it into English. Lily repeated it to think while the boy Sandy asked a clarification question in Line 97. Then in Line 100, Dara tried to answer Lily's question. She repeated half of the sentence "we will" to think of the English expression of "游轮", but still can't figure it out, so she spoke out the Chinese to appeal for help from the others. Lily translated it literally into "travel ship". In Line 102, Dara then reorganized her previous sentence. But soon she realized that Lily's translation is not what she really wants to refer, so she rejected directly by saying "no". The boy then gave another translation "visiting ship". This

time Dara repeated it and continued. In Line 104, Dara wanted to express the "Bai tribe", but she pronounced it as "tripe". Realizing that it might be wrong, she repaired it into "traip" which is also wrong, but the others failed to repair it and Dara went on. In S-S interaction, students scaffold each other mostly at the lexical and content level. They tried their best to scaffold each other and keep the conversations moving forward. They do not attend much to form at the sentence level since the task is communication-oriented, so it's enough as long as they can understand each other by using various strategies including paralinguistic one. But it also revealed the students' incompetence in scaffolding each other as they cannot offer correct feedback to their peers most of the time.

### 3.2.2 Scaffolding in negotiation of meaning by T-S interaction

In T-S interaction, the teacher used a lot of devices to extend the conversation and guide the student to say more. She first asked interview questions to the student by repetition and rephrasing to make her questions clear, then used examples to inspire the student to think more and speak more. After the student gave the answer, she summarized it by rephrasing the student's previous utterances. The student on the other hand tried his best to cooperate with the teacher and he paid much attention to the correctness of his speech.

Example 2 Negotiating meaning at the content level

105 Teacher: Can you describe to me a typical English class in Wuhan University?

(R)

106 Light: Typical English class...

107 Teacher: Average English class. (S)

108 Light: Just like ... Um ... Um ...

Critical thinking class which is taught by Beth... Um...

109 Teacher: But explain to me like you come in, you sit down, what happens the teacher comes in, how does the class going, what is going on? (DM,D,S)

110 Light: Um ... the teacher asks questions and we answer. [Okay] We can pack some activities in ... in ... during the class. [Okay] Yesterday we took part in an activity called a privilege of Line...

111 Teacher: But I'm not talking about the program that you are in now, I'm talking in general. When you take your classes in your ... you know, during the year, what do the teachers do in class? (DM)

112 Light: ... Maybe the most time, most of the time the teacher just read the book or the PPT and then asked question, we answered and then we talked or we take some exercise in classes, or...

113 Teacher: Okay, thank you. (F)

In this extract, the teacher was asking the student to describe a typical English class he takes in Wuhan University. The student Light misunderstood it as describing the English class he was taking at present in the summer program. In Line 106, Light repeated part of the teacher's utterance in a stalling intonation which was regarded as a sign of non-understanding, so the teacher repeated her question by rephrasing it in Line 107. Then in Line 108 the student answered by giving an example. The example Light

gave was just the lesson he was taking in the program, but his last words were in a low voice so the teacher didn't realize it. Since his answer only concerned the kind of lesson he was taking, not the procedure of the class, so in Line 109 the teacher interrupted him and repeated her question again by rephrasing it to guide the student. In Line 110, Light then further explained the procedure of the class he was taking in the program. It was his last utterance in which he tried to give a concrete example that revealed what he was talking about is the class he took yesterday in the program. So in Line 111, the teacher again interrupted him and corrected the question, asking Light to describe the class he took during the year. Finally Light got the question and began to describe the procedure of an average class he took. The teacher gave a positive feedback to the student's answer.

We can refer from those examples that when communicating with the native English teacher, the students tried their best to express their meaning. They used a lot of repetitions to gain time to think and keep the communication channel open. They also paid much attention to the correctness of their utterances as they used a lot of self-repair and restructuring strategies. The teacher also used lots of modifications to express her meaning to guide the non-native English students. She rephrased her question a lot to simplify the task. She then used demonstrations to guide the students and recruit the students' interest to extend the conversation. At last she used interpretive summary to summarize and confirm the students' an-

swer. Through the teacher's scaffolding, the students can carry on with the task successfully and they also learned some new knowledge. The teacher recruited the students' interest to say more and at the same time maintained the direction; she also tried to control the students' frustration by giving positive and encouraging feedback. Although the teacher did not give much corrective feedback to guide the students to notice the form, the students paid greater attention to their correctness with the native teacher's presence and were able to self-regulate their utterance most of the time.

### 3.3 Noticing the form

In communication, both the teacher and the students paid attention to language forms and repaired their own and others' mistakes. But since this is a communication-oriented program and the tasks are also communication-oriented, attention on forms is not that much emphasized. In the current study, there is more self-repair than other-repair in both S-S and T-S interaction. This is in line with most previous studies showing that speakers are more likely to use self-initiated repair than other-initiated repair as listeners assume that the speaker will repair themselves (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977; Kasper, 1985; Garcia Mayo, 2005). In S-S interaction, the students self-repaired their own mistakes on vocabulary as "traip" for "tripe" in Example 1; most of their repairs were on the lexical level. When interacting with the native English teacher, the students paid more attention to their language forms as they used far more self-repair within vari-

ous levels as in Example 2. This can be explained by the fact that the students felt free when talking to their peers, so long as they can understand each other; L1, gestures or some mistakes are alright. But when talking to the native teacher, the students tried their best to show their ability. Since L1 and mistakes may be obstacles in making the native teacher understand them, they then paid more attention to their language forms.

As for other-repair, it is rather infrequent. Students repaired their peers' mistakes mostly on the lexical and content level. They do not point out directly the grammar mistakes in their peer's utterance as in Example 3, and the only place they clearly pointed out other's error is in Example 4, concerning pronunciation. This can be explained by the students' inclination of avoiding face-threatening devices and keeping their status equal. It may also be due to the students' lack of relevant knowledge and proficiency, so they can't recognize or repair their peers' mistakes.

#### Example 3:

5 Brutes: And... uh... you note how many, how much stones?

6 Della: How many stones? (F)

7 Brutes: Yes. (F)

#### Example 4:

203 Brutes: I don't know, but I know I'm cau(si)ous.

204 Della: Cautious. (F)

205 Brutes: Yes. (F)

The teacher rarely corrected grammatical mistakes in the students' speech. The teacher only corrected the students' mistakes when the students struggled many

times trying to express, so the teacher provided a word to help or when the students' expression is not clear and the teacher offered another expression to confirm it, and the teacher corrected in a euphemistic way. As Hamilton suggested in an empirical study done in a summer immersion program that a close examination of repair mechanism of both teachers and learners can be useful in understanding what they think about language learning across activity types (Hamilton, 2004). Results in the present study then suggest that the goal of the activity is free-flowing communication; the native teacher cared more of the content of communication and she avoided direct correction to create a free atmosphere and to encourage the students to speak more. Although the native teacher rarely guided the students' attention on forms and repair their mistakes in those tasks, the role of the teacher was still significant as the students tended to restructure their own sentences more when interacting with the native teacher than with their peers. This means the students paid more attention to language forms on the syntax level when the teacher appeared, as in the following example.

**Example 5:**

57 Teacher: Okay, alright, so um imagine a perfect English classroom with a perfect English teacher; what do you think the classroom and learning in this classroom would look like? (R,D)

58 Xietao: Okay. I think, um... so can you give me some guide?

59 Teacher: No, I want you to make it. (F)

60 Xietao: (Laughing) Okay, I, first, I want to have a, have an image of our English teacher. I think she is just like you; she is a very caring woman, because I think women are more suitable for teachers, for teaching someone. (D)

61 And she um, is better for she, for her to be middle aged, I think middle aged women is good at, good at teaching someone.

62 And I, I want her to be very, to be very, how to say, enthusiastic, optimistic and glad to talk with our, students, us, us students and then the, the class should be, should involve not only the, uh, knowledge. Something we must learn from the class, but something, um something about our experience, our daily life.

63 I think the class shouldn't be so, so, um... I don't know how to express. That is nobody will, nobody's go, want to talk. I want everybody talking in the class and express their ideas free. And then we can show, share our stories, and show our um... thinking about everything freely. I think this is the most important.

64 And then the students is not afraid of speaking. I think in our Chinese people, our Chinese students is, are afraid of speaking in public because we are afraid of making mistakes. I think this is obstacle we must overcome.

65 Teacher: So in the perfect English class, English language class, you think the teacher will help you to overcome that obstacle. (IS)

66 Xietao: Yes, I think this is the most difficult thing for us to open our mouth, if we begin to speak, then we will gradually make progress. But if we don't speak, we will stay in the same ground. (F)

67 Teacher: Okay, so in order for this to

happen, [Yeah] all of these things you have just said, what should the teacher think about when the teacher begins her classroom, that ideal teacher in ideal classroom that you just described? What do you think the teacher should keep in mind? (F, DM, R, S)

68 Xietao: Keep in mind, um ... I think the teacher should think about the topic of the class firstly, first, and then she should... (F)

In the above example, the teacher was asking the student Xietao to describe a perfect English class. In Line 58, Xietao asked the teacher to give some guide first but was rejected by the teacher in Line 59 wanting the student to make it himself. Then Lines 60 to 64 are all Xietao's answer. As the data show, in Xietao's answer, he tried his best to express his meaning and paid great attention to language forms in his sentences. The student restructured and constantly repaired his utterances to make them more correct and clear. The result shows that when communicating with a native teacher, the students paid more attention to their language forms and this strengthened the role of the teacher.

### 3.4 Mutual scaffolding in peer interaction

We can see that in peer interaction, students were able to scaffold each other to reach mutual understanding and move the conversation on. Not only did the more proficient student provided help to the less proficient peers in especially words and forms, the less proficient student can also provide assistance to the more proficient peers in especially providing ideas and words. But it

should be noted that sometimes the students may generate inappropriate forms or words because they are not sure and lack relevant knowledge and can only settle on their own creative choices. In some cases, the students reached consensus on an answer which is in fact incorrect or inappropriate. In some other cases, the students failed to scaffold or repair and chose to abandon or ignore the information. For instance, in Example 1, Dara seemed to be more controlling of the whole conversation, but she still appealed for others' help on the word "游轮" (yacht). Her peer Lily offered the answer "travel ship" and Dara accepted it at first and then denied it. The boy Sandy then gave another expression of "visiting ship" and Dara accepted it finally. Dara's pronunciation of "tripe" in the last sentence is wrong and she was aware of her mistake and self-regulated the answer but was still wrong.

## 3.5 Quality of some prominent scaffolding categories in S-S interaction

### 3.5.1 Feedback(F)

In peer interaction, the most frequent scaffolding strategies the students used is feedback (25. 77%). The students offered feedback to confirm others' words, clarify meaning and co-construct each other's words. However, the students gave feedback in simple ways and mostly by simple repetition. Repetition appeared most often especially in peer interaction. Previous research paid little attention to the frequent repetition used by non-native speakers which is a common phenomenon in their interlanguage development. Tin (2003) observed from his

study that repetition is one crucial scaffolding strategy to construct original or new significant ideas and knowledge in group discussion at college level. In Tarone and Yule's research on communicating strategies in East-West interaction, they observed repetition as a new type of strategy used with two functions: the speaker appears to stall, trying to find a word or phrase to express and to provide the listener with another chance to hear and process the information (Tarone & Yule, 1987). The present study observed repetition used by speakers with three functions: first, to stall and gain time to think; second, to provide the listener another chance to hear and process information and third to emphasize certain message and show emotions. Examples of self-repetition with each function are as follows:

**Function 1:** Self-repetition to stall and gain time to think

Example 6:

110 Anna: What's the tourist, what's the tourist attraction...?

**Function 2:** Self-repetition to provide the listener another chance to hear

Example 7:

135 Andy: During the day, umm, climb the mountain, climb.

**Function 3:** Self repetition to emphasize and show emotions

Example 8:

85 Nancy: I mean, if, if we want to attract the foreigners, we have to choose like, umm, Tian'anmen Square, something like that. But if it's about Chinese, we have to choose more nature points.

86 Andy: Yes, yes. (F)

87 Anna: (Turn to Nancy) You decide it; you decide it. (F)

88 Andy: I have an idea; I have an idea. We can blind the traveler for travel and we can choose a place, Shandong province, because, because it is the Chinese culture in the first, the first in Shandong province. (F)

In Example 8, Nancy proposed an important question in their decision-making process which the other two thought as very important. After Nancy proposed her idea, the other two all repeated their utterance ("Yes, yes" "You decide it; you decide it") as a strong affirmative to her suggestion. When their peers or teacher proposed an important idea or provide a word or message they wanted to express, the students tend to use repetition, especially utterances like "yes/no" to show their strong affirmation or rejection. Sometimes the three functions may appear together, as in Example 9.

Example 9:

68 Lily: I can, we can draw some pictures, draw some pictures, umm, make it easier to, to see...

69 Dara: So the first day ... noodles, noodles.

70 Lily: 飞机。不是, 我的意思, umm, draw some pictures instead of the "airport".

71 Dara: Oh, I got it, got it. (F)

72 Lily: So maybe we can draw a plane, how to draw a plane?

(Drawing a plane, all laughing) Oh, my god!

73 Dara: (Turn to Sandy) Can you draw one? (R)

74 Lily: Can you draw a plane? (R)

75 Sandy: No, no, no. (F)

76 Lily: 它长什么样呢? 知道它长什么样我就会画了。

77 Dara: Whatever, whatever, we know that, we know that. (FC, DM)

In this dialogue, Lily proposed that they can use pictures to make their plan clear. In Line 68, Lily repeated her words to stall and gain time to think how to express her idea. Then in Line 69, Dara misunderstood Lily's meaning and repeated "noodles" twice to make sure if Lily meant this. In Line 70, Lily used L1 to show negation and then explained her meaning in English, then in Line 71 Dara got Lily's message and repeated her words to show affirmation. Sandy and Dara's repetition in Line 75 and 77 all serves as the third function. Among all the 154 incidences of self-repetition in S-S interaction, self-repetition with the first function amounted to 99 incidences, the second function 31 and the third function 24. This seemed to suggest that students tend to have more self-regulation than other-regulation. The students were trying hard to get their message across, and they would repeat their words rather than just abandon it. However, too much repetition affected the fluency of communication and the students' simple repetition as feedback has also failed to encourage and stimulate their peers' thinking. It also revealed that the students lack appropriate knowledge to scaffold each other.

### 3.5.2 Providing a word or an idea

In most occasions, the students scaffolded each other by providing a word or an idea. In S-S interaction, when a student lingered on an utterance or appealed for help, the peers tried to supply appropriate words

or phrases to complete the missing item. The students appealed for help mostly on lexical items. They used Chinese to ask their peers "How to say or spell(a Chinese word) in English?" and their peers will try their best to offer help. Even when they were not certain either, they gave feedback as well.

#### Example 10:

196 Andy: OK, so this is Qingdao and we can...

197 Anna: Go beaches and the beer festival. (P)

198 Andy: Beer...? (F)

199 Anna: Festival. (F)

200 Andy: Oh, beer festival, yes. (F)

201 Anna: And what's this? (point to the map)

202 Andy: I don't know, we can, this is a famous, a famous, famous place called 龙山温泉 (Longshan Spring). (F)

203 Nancy: 龙山? 它的热水是会冒出来, 又是什么来自天山水 (Longshan? The hot water in it will exude, water from the Snow Mountain again!).

204 Anna: Do people go to the hot spring... (DM)

205 Andy: In summer? Umm, hot, hot spring. (F)

206 Anna: 温泉 (hot spring). (F)

207 Andy: Yeah... (F)

208 Anna: In summer? Don't you? Ok, you can, you can. (F, FC)

This extract presents a good example of mutual scaffolding between peers. In Line 196, Andy stalled in his sentence to gain time to think what they can do in Qingdao. Then in Line 197, Anna completed his sentence by giving a suggestion. Not hearing

the word “festival”, Andy asked Anna to repeat it by giving the first word with a raising intonation. Thus the students co-constructed the first part. In Line 204, Anna wanted to ask if people will go to the hot spring in summer and Andy has already guessed out the girl’s question, so he completed Anna’s sentence before she finished her Line. However, Andy did not answer Anna’s question immediately, instead he repeated the girl’s last word “hot spring” to think it over since this is a new word to him and he wanted to manage it. Anna regarded it as a signal of non-understanding, so she gave the Chinese expression of “hot spring” immediately. In Line 207, Andy’s answer “Yeah” in a stalling intonation can be both a confirmation mark showing that he knew the word and an answer to the girl’s question. This answer was obviously unclear, so Anna asked again in Line 208. With Andy still did not give a clear answer immediately, Anna then answered the question herself by repeating “you can, you can”. As the data show, providing a word or an idea appears more frequently in S-S interaction (15. 95%) than in T-S interaction (1. 05%). This is in line with previous studies (Pica, et al., 1995; Garcia Mayo, 2005). All the provisions offered by the students are ideas and words not concerning linguistic items. This is similar to what Garcia Mayo (2005) reported that students’ completion mainly focused on lexical items and not much on syntax building. This again presents the communicative nature of the task in which students care more about meaning and content, not linguistic forms.

### 3.6 Quality of some prominent scaffolding categories in T-S interaction

#### 3.6.1 Recruitment, simplifying the task, demonstration

The most frequent scaffolding category in T-S interaction is Recruitment (29. 58%). The teacher was very good at recruiting the students’ interest and engagement in the task. She used examples and easy questions to recruit students’ participation and guide them. Most often the three scaffolding categories of Recruitment (29. 58%), Simplifying the task (14. 79%) and Demonstration (7. 40%) are embedded in each other. In group work, the teacher tried to recruit every student’s interest in the task and she made sure that each student participated in the conversation as in Example 11. In the interview task with individual students, the teacher recruited the student’s interest by giving examples and simplifying the task.

##### Example 11:

240. Teacher: Tell me, tell me one each, OK? So one-one, one-one, OK? Go ahead. (R)

241. Wang Rong: Uh, uh, here, there are two adults.

242. Teacher: And... go on. (F)

243. Wang Rong: And...

244. Teacher: Dara’s picture, Dara’s, come on; say the full sentence. (R)

245. Wang Rong: And here there are one.

246. Teacher: There’s only one, OK. (F)

247. Wang Rong: Only one. And in this, in this branch, have, have eight, eight

leaves and...

248. Dara: Ten, ten.

249. Wang Rong: Ten, oh, ten leaves and here eleven.

250. Dara: Eleven.

251. Wang Rong: Eleven.

252. Teacher: Eleven, OK, Dara? (R)

253. Dara: Yes, we have...

254. Wang Rong: And here there are only one flower and here are two

255. Teacher: Okay. Dara, your turn (R)

256. Dara: Yes, we have, I have six stones on the road and he has just five.

257. Teacher: Excellent. (F)

258. Dara: And the fences, I have four, and he has five.

259. Teacher: Okay. (F)

In this extract, the teacher was asking the students to summarize their findings in distinguishing the differences of their pictures. The teacher first asked the students to tell the differences one by one, and the student Wang Rong answered the first difference. After the teacher asked them to go on, Wang Rong went on pointing the second difference without noticing that it should be Dara's turn. So in line 244, the teacher tried to recruiting Dara's participation. But the teacher did not asked Dara to answer directly; she just asked them to turn to Dara's picture, so Wang Rong went on. During this process, Dara only joined in to correct Wang Rong's mistake. Then in line 252, the teacher directly asked Dara to answer. Before Dara finished her words, Wang Rong gave the answer. So the teacher again asked Dara to participate more directly in line 255 and gave positive feedback to

Dara's answer. We can see from this example that the teacher paid attention to each student and tried to recruit every student to participate in the task.

In interviewing individual students, the teacher scaffolded the students by recruiting the students' interest through a series of questions. In asking those questions, the teacher used demonstration to make the question more clear and easy to understand. And the three scaffolding functions of recruitment, simplifying the task and demonstration can be embedded in each other. In this way the teacher successfully encouraged the students to extend the conversation and at the same time maintained the direction of the whole conversation.

### 3.6.2 Feedback and interpretive summary

The second frequent scaffolding category in T-S interaction is Feedback (24.29%). Most of the time the teacher gave positive feedback as confirmation to the students' answer. Even if the students' answer was not what the teacher intended to get, she still gave positive feedback to encourage the students and then asked in another way as in Example 12. Compared to the simple repetition feedback in peer interaction, the teacher gave feedback as "okay", "right" and she also gave feedback showing her interest. Also the teacher interpretively summarized the student's answer to confirm and clarify; this kind of scaffolding is also frequent with a percentage of 14.08%. In this way the teacher made sure each interview question was answered clearly. This is different from the students' simple repetition in peer interaction which cannot trigger their peers' further ideas. The teacher's interpretive summary helped the

student summarize their own ideas and acted as a trigger to further ideas.

Example 12:

40. Teacher: In order for you to learn English well, what do you think is the most important thing for you to do?

41. Wang Rong: I think, I can, I can, if I learn it well, I, I, I'm able to communicate with you

42. Teacher: Yeah, right. But what do you need to do to learn it well? How do you learn English? (F, DM)

43. Wang Rong: How do I learn English? [Um ... ] Um, in, I learn, I learn English most in, in class, and after class. I often listen to tapes and watch videos, watch videos; sometimes I watch English movie ...

44. Teacher: So let me just summarize; so you try to watch movies, listen to music. (IS)

45. Wang Rong: Yeah.

The teacher asked the student what was the most important thing to do in order to learn English well; the student mistakenly understood it as what was the most important thing in English study and he answered that communication was important. In line 42, the teacher did not deny the student's answer, rather she gave a positive feedback to it first and then asked the question again in another way. This time the student gave a very long answer with many ways of learning English, so the teacher summarized his answer briefly and was confirmed by the student.

## 4. Conclusion

The study examined how the Chinese non-English majors received interactive assistance of scaffolding from their peers and the native English teacher and how they negotiated for meaning to reach successful communication through scaffolding. The results suggest that when communicating with peers, the students used both verbal and non-verbal strategies to express their meaning and they were able to assist each other to reach mutual success. Both the more proficient and less proficient learners were able and willingly to offer assistance to each other, but the learners sometimes offered correct knowledge, sometimes incorrect, and other times they failed to scaffold their peers because of limited knowledge. The native English teacher was very good at recruiting

the students' interest and participation in the task. She used demonstration, task simplification and direction maintenance to scaffold the students and then gave positive feedback and interpretively summarized the students' answer as confirmation and trigger the students' further ideas. The native English teacher seldom repaired the students' grammatical mistakes in order to keep the communication move on and encourage the students to talk as much as they can. Still the role of the teacher is clear, as the students were more aware of their own mistakes and they paid more attention to their language forms in interacting with the teacher. In practical classroom learning and teaching, both the teacher and the students' awareness should be aroused on how to bet-

ter scaffold the students, thus the students may notice the gap in their knowledge and gradually reach from other-regulation to self-regulation.

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# Measuring Language Learner Autonomy: Why and How

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**Abstract:** This study reviews measurement of language learner autonomy (LA) published in the ten core language journals in the past thirty-five years. The results reveal three main research purposes for LA measurement, and its dynamic spiral development in the past years. Some problems of language LA measurement are identified and a multi-dimensional hierarchical framework for LA measurement is formulated. The feasibility, application and adaptation of the emerging framework are to be elaborated together with realistic constraints.

**Keywords:** (learner autonomy), Measurement, Core journal, Framework

## 1. Introduction

Since learner autonomy found its way in the second language learning in 1979, its measurement has never been an easy job for “the variety of types and scope of learning makes any attempt at its definition, analysis and measurement problematic” (Morrison, 2005, p. 270) and the “learners will generally seek to please the teacher ... Put simply, learners will give up their autonomy to put on the mask of autonomous behavior” (Benson, 2001, p. 52).

Quite a few researchers produced a cer-

tain influential LA instrument to measure LA (O'Malley and Chamot, 1985; Oxford, 1990; Cotterall, 1995; Xu, 2007; Hu, 2011; Guo & Dai, 2013), but no single research has been conducted to review LA measurement except Lin's (2014) analysis of LA measurement since 1970s. Lin's research is meaningful in that she pointed out the paradigm shift in LA assessment, but her study was based on a limited number of relevant research works. More studies embed measurement as part of research methodology

rather than take it as the research focus.

A small-scale survey among middle-school teachers shows that all of them acknowledge the significance of autonomous learning, but only half of them have tried to measure LA in different ways, assignment checking, testing(written and oral), questioning, chatting via WeChat, using learner profile and class observation. Most of measurement is informal and related to learner achievement as quite a few admit it is not eas-

y to measure LA and learner attitude. However, evaluation has been accepted as one of the key elements in language curricula and programs(Gardner and Miller, 1999; Richards, 2001). In the hope of clarifying theoretical and practical issues about LA measurement, this study, therefore, aims to answer the following two questions from the perspectives of researchers:

- a. Why is learner autonomy measured?
- b. How to measure learner autonomy?

## 2. Methodology

A mixed-methods approach is used to answer the two questions. Firstly, the number of papers on LA measurement is counted and categorized into different groups. Secondly, the main research findings in different phases are depicted and analyzed to elicit researchers' perceptions about LA research. In this way, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are used.

### 2.1 Data collection

Despite the controversy about the definition of the term "learner autonomy", the research enthusiasm about LA has never been on the decline. As a result, quite a lot of the papers on LA have been published in the ten core language journals in the past thirty years(1981-2015).

The ten English journals are selected according to Benson's (2007) overview on learner autonomy and Richards' (2009) review on qualitative research in language teaching. They are *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, *the Modern Language*

*Journal*, *TESOL Quarterly*, *ELT Journal*, *Language Teaching*, *Language Teaching Research*, *Language Testing*, *RELC Journal*, and *System*. Papers are selected according to the keywords related to LA, learner autonomy, self-directed learning, independent learning, self-regulated learning development like strategy instruction/training, self-access, portfolio. These papers are collected and stored in the endnote for the further annotations.

### 2.2 Data analysis

The papers about empirical studies are then selected, while personal opinions and book reviews are eliminated. Then the papers are coded in the form of annotations in an effort to categorize purposes of using LA measurement and methods of LA measurement. If more than one purpose is explored in a study, annotation goes to the primary one. The different methods of LA measurement are also counted to see the trajectory and trend of its development.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 LA measurement and research types

The results show that the papers on LA amounted to 196 till Year 2015 and the number of papers has been on the increase in the past years, which conforms to the findings of Xu and Zhu (2013). The number of the papers published in *System* and *ELT Journal* ranked first and second, 64 and 40 respectively.

After the personal opinions and book reviews are excluded, the rest papers can be divided into four categories: LA overviews, LA surveys, LA longitudinal studies and instruments of LA measurement. The expansion of LA measurement, as shown in Table 1, reflects that LA research has gained increasing popularity and maturity in the past years. .

**Tab. 1 LA measurement for diverse research purposes**

	1981— 1985	1986— 1990	1991— 1995	1996— 2000	2001— 2005	2006— 2010	2011— 2015
O	0	1	4	1	2	6	4
I	0	0	1	0	1	2	1
S	0	2	2	4	4	8	12
L	1	2	3	3	4	11	13
T	1	5	10	8	11	27	30

Note: O= overview; S= survey; L= longitudinal study; I= instrument; T= total

Table 1 reveals most of LA measurement was included in LA surveys or longitudinal studies to investigate either the status quo of learner autonomy or the effectiveness

of LA treatment or intervention. In LA overviews, LA measurement was mentioned as part of literature review rather than described in detail. Few studies focused on the development of an instrument. That is, LA measurement is more often used as part of methodology instead of a research topic or focus.

#### 3.2 LA measurement and research

Generally speaking, LA measurement can be divided into three types: qualitative method, quantitative method and mixed methods. All the methods are on the rise in number, particularly, mixed methods ( See Tab. 2).

**Tab. 2 LA measurement and research methods**

	1981— 1985	1986— 1990	1991— 1995	1996— 2000	2001— 2005	2006— 2010	2011— 2015
A	0	1	2	4	5	12	8
B	0	2	3	2	3	6	12
M	1	1	1	1	1	3	6
T	1	4	6	7	9	21	26

Note: A= qualitative method; B= quantitative method; M= mixed methods; T= total

Quantitative measurement usually takes form of questionnaires. In practice, researchers might directly borrow or adapt a well-accepted questionnaire with high validity and reliability, such as the frequently cited SILL by Oxford(1990), or still some might develop a new questionnaire from a new theoretical perspective and new LA constructs by integrating and referring to the question-

naires available. While qualitative measurement is more often related to the methods like interviews, diaries (journals), self-assessment, case study.

Specifically, in different periods, LA measurement had different focuses. From 1981 to 1990, researchers explored definitions and adopted qualitative methods to investigate the status quo of LA. During this period, the use of learning strategies was regarded as an essential element for an autonomous learning. Therefore, researchers mainly employed some qualitative methods to elicit the strategies used by learners and then categorized according to a certain psychological or cognitive theory. For instance, O'Malley and Chamot(1985) used interviews to collect learning strategies and grouped them into metacognitive, cognitive and socio-affective strategies by following information processing theory.

The period between 1991 and 2000 saw a surge in the quantitative studies on LA measurement. Apart from frequent use and validation of existing questionnaires like SILL, a variety of questionnaires came out based on diverse LA constructs (Cotterall, 1995; White, 1995). However, skill-specific strategies were extracted qualitatively (Goh, 1998). Meanwhile, more approaches to cultivate learner autonomy were sought, self-access, portfolios along with the formative assessment.

Since 2001, LA research grew more mature from static to dynamic, from fixed to flexible with diverse models. Researchers like Benson (2007) came to realize different levels of LA and possible approaches to foster LA. Quantitative

studies became more refined in that researchers kept revising existing instruments (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002) and developing new instruments (Tseng, Dörnyei & Schmitt, 2006; Vandergrift, Goh, Mareschal & Tafaghodtari, 2006; Macaro & Erler, 2008). As a result, almost every type of skill-specific strategies was available. Still in this period of time, quite a few researchers realized the significance of metacognition for LA development and measured it in their research (Rivers, 2001; Goh, 2008; Zhang, 2010; Huang, 2010) either quantitatively or qualitatively. Dynamic assessment was conducted in self-access centers as well (Malcolm, 2004; Morrison, 2005) with more participants involved in the whole evaluation process. Portfolio and blogs were used both as a means of LA development and a means of assessment in various settings (Nieder, 2004; Little, 2005, 2009; Cummins & Davesne, 2009) in the trend of LA globalization (Schmenk, 2005).

Since 2011, dynamic complex theories have exerted great influences on LA measurement. More attention has been paid to the individual learners' language development rather than a large group, therefore, qualitative approaches were rejuvenated in in-depth interviews and narrative approaches. To some extent, LA measurement came from individual studies for a set of accepted criteria and feasible guidance, and went back to individual studies for awareness of individual uniqueness and potential development. In this period, more questionnaires were available to testify the effectiveness of strategy instruction as is depicted in Vandergrift & Cross (2015). Researchers used multi-modal approaches to track learning process and measure learning progress (Cross, 2014; Huang,

2014; Gunning & Oxford, 2014; Moeller, Theiler & Wu, 2012; Ziegler, 2014; Lam, 2015) in developing different skills. Metacognition and readiness continued to draw research interests and be measured (Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Ahmad & Razeq, 2014).

To sum up, LA measurement has become diversified with more modes and approaches, participants and factors involved. LA measurement seems to be circular, coming from individual studies in a qualitative approach, and going back to individual studies in a qualitative approach. But as a matter of fact, there is no denying quantitative methods have grown mature in the past years to gain an insight into status quo among a group of learners, and more concerns have been shown over individual development and potentials. Therefore, to some extent it is more like a spiral, keeping rising and progressing.

### 3.3 Framework of LA measurement

The studies on LA measurement are suggestive that LA measurement is complex and dynamic, as is illustrated in Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008). LA measurement has received impacts from emerging theories, models, LA constructs, and factors in the learning process.

Though some researchers endeavor to keep pace with the development of the society and theoretical development by revising and improving their instruments, still it is not uncommon that some researchers measure LA in a somewhat arbitrary way. They may use the instrument available directly without considering whether the context and learners are similar to

those of the original study; or they may adapt a certain instrument out of no reason; or they will design an instrument without elaborating its theoretical underpinning and sources of inspiration. Therefore, it is necessary to work out a framework incorporating some essential parts for those interested in LA measurement to help them find out an appropriate way, be they learners, teachers or researchers. The dimensions of the framework are conceived out of the research design.

As is shown in Table 3, the three-tiered framework illustrates the interrelations between theories in different tiers, the learning theories and SLA theories are influenced by linguistics, and theories from other disciplines. The LA model is developed by combining the models proposed by Benson (2001) and Oxford (2003).

Unavoidably, LA constructs are decided by theories and perspectives of the model. In this study, LA elements are extracted from previous studies in LA measurement in section 3.2. The more frequently the elements are measured, the more significant they are. Roughly, some are considered core elements and some might be peripheral ones depending on the research purpose, setting and culture. That means this is a multi-dimensional multi-tiered framework. LA development and measurement is no longer left to learners themselves, instead, it may inevitably interact with other people, tools, society. For instance, Benson (2013) places emphasis on digital literacy, which he considers to exert great effects on LA, therefore, learners' use of their digital devices may play a pivotal role in LA development and

LA measurement itself

Tab. 3 Three-tiered framework of LA measurement

	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
Theory	Learning theories, SLA theories	Linguistics	Trans-disciplinary theories
Model	Psycho-cognitive	Technical, Socio-cultural	Political-critical
LA Element	Meta-cognition, Readiness	Strategy training, Mediation from peers, teachers or other people	Contexts (schools, society and cultures)
Feature	Independence	Inter-dependence	Inter-dependence

This framework is supposed to provide a preliminary idea for those who intend to measure or evaluate learner autonomy. When a researcher plans to measure autonomous language learning, he or she is supposed to consider the theoretical underpinnings, constructs of LA, relevant perspective (s), and then narrow down to the elements to be measured. That is, for difference research purposes, different measurement may be used even for the same learner. Still more specifications and examples are to be provided to increase its applicability.

## 4. Conclusion

Drawing on the research on LA measurement in the past thirty-five years, we propose a multi-dimensional three-tiered framework to measure autonomous foreign language learning in the Chinese context. Its feasibility and applications, however, await further validation, examples and discussions.

# Learning Styles among Non-Native Speakers: A Comparative Study of Chinese and Iranian EFL Learners' Perceptual Learning Styles

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate and compare Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles with their age, gender, and years of study English. The total sample of the subjects, including 331 EFL learners (46.5% Chinese and 53.5% Iranian), filled the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire (PLSPQ). Descriptive and inferential statistical analysis showed that Iranian EFL learners are more visual and auditory, while Chinese EFL learners prefer tactile and kinesthetic styles. The study results regarding ages and degrees (Masters and Bachelors) revealed that older learners and students of a Master degree prefer more perceptual learning styles. Also, there is no significant difference of scores of the scale found between females and males. At the end some implication is considered.

**Keywords:** Learning styles, Perceptual preferences, Modality, Iranian, Chinese

## 1. Introduction

With traditional approaches of teaching English to EFL and ESL learners, the teacher is the only active participant in presenting materials, and responsible factor, while learner-centered approaches include learners' effort for their own learning. According to Cheng(2000), "In a teacher-centered teaching and learning environment, the learners are doomed to reticence and passivity."

ty". In the teacher-centered approaches, the teacher uses monologues to facilitate learning, and less attention is paid to the learners. Gradually from DM, GTM, and Audio-lingual Method to Communicative Language Teaching, the great change was emphasized on the role of the learners. This change leads to learners' autonomy in its strongest form, i. e., the ability to conduct,

monitor, evaluate, and check the learning and its processes become the responsibilities of the individuals. In learning a language, to become autonomous, learners experience special training; for instance, language learning strategies training, “aptitude and attitude, concepts, assumptions and beliefs, which in turn affect learning styles, which itself, as many researchers in the field maintain, affects choice of learning strategy”(Hurd, et al. , 2001). Language learning strategies are closely linked to learning styles. Another trend is to become aware of the learners’ learning styles. Spolsky(1989) mentioned that “the difference between learning styles and learning strategies is the level of intentionality and awareness”(as cited in Bailey, et al. , 2000). Different students learn in many different ways(Price, et al. , 1977). Matching learning condition to learning style preferences leads to success than a single type of instruction(Tight, 2010). Also, “students who are taught by their own styles score higher on tests and factual knowledge, have better attitudes, and are more efficient”(Price, et al. , 1977). Learning style is viewed from a different perspective by Dörnyei(2005), who puts learning styles in the classification of individual differences. “Among the various IDs that exist, learning styles appear to be especially significant due to the way they mediate between personal characteristics and learning outcomes”(Tight, 2010). One of the preliminary stages for teachers to teach and learners to learn is understanding language learners’ learning styles. For example, some learners are auditory and some are visual learners, and so the medium of instructions to these groups can be using audios for the former group, and studying charts for the latter group. In a more “student-centered approach, researchers have explored the

relationship of learning styles to second language acquisition”(Rossi-Le, 1989). Dunn(1990) mentioned that 3/5 of a learning style was determined by genetics, and the remaining 2/5 by outside factors (as cited in Rhoads and Gough, 2005). External factors, such as nationality(Griffiths, 2008), culture (Nelson, 1995), teaching styles, kind of tasks, and educational system, or context(Semeijn and Velden, 1999) also affect the individual’s learning style. It means that learners have different learning styles not just in the genes that they received from parents, but because of the different experiences that each of them gained; this is what Kinsella(1995) called nature and nurture. Guild(1994) commends that most researchers believe that learning styles are a function of both nature and nurture. “Each child has a personal learning style that results from innate tendencies and environmental experiences” (Fierro, 1997). Many educators emphasized on the role of culture in learning styles (Dunn, et al. , 1990; Elaison, 1995; Hyland, 1993; Melton, 1990; Nelson, 1995; Oxford, et al. , 1992). For example, in contrast to Iranian society that features competitiveness, especially among students in academic settings (Naserieh & Sarab, 2013), Chinese learners are from a cooperative(i. e. , collectivist) culture, where group is constant for a much longer period of time (Nelson, 1995). Rossi-Le (1995) accentuates the role of perceptual learning styles in learning process that is neglected, especially in English learning of adults. But very little study has been done to identify the Iranian learners’ learning styles (Bidabadi & Yamat, 2010), not only due to the paucity of research on learning style preferences of both Chinese and Iranian EFL learners at the university level, but also because learning styles are context-depended

(Naserieh & Sarab, 2013). Hence the aim of the study is to investigate and compare Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles.

## 2. Literature review

While research on learning styles refers back to five decades ago, the origins are traced back much further (Cassidy, 2004). Although research on learning styles comes and goes, it has a long and varied history (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997). The movement of learning styles from psychology to language learning was done by Witkins, who brought the concepts of field dependent and field independent in 1962 (Wintgerst, et al., 2001). Before Witkins, Jung (1923) coined a theory of psychological types by which two attitudes (extraversion and introversion), two perceptual functions (intuition and sensing) and judgment functions (thinking and feeling) were introduced (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 1997). Keefe (1979) defines learning styles as "cognitive, affective, and physiological traits that are relatively stable indicators of how learners perceive, interact with and respond to the learning environment". Brown (2007) defines learning styles as "consistent and rather enduring tendencies, or preferences within an individual". One of the subcategories of sensory preferences is the perceptual learning style (Dörnyei, 2005; Reid, 1995). Perceptual learning styles "concern the perceptual modes, or learning channels through which students take information (Dörnyei, 2005). Every learner not only has some cognitive styles among bipolar dimensions, or multidimensional of cognitive styles, but also pos-

sesses some learning styles among sensory and social dimensions (Oxford, 2003). Dunn and Dunn (1974; 1992) put perceptual learning styles under the category of physiological characteristics that learners need to know (as cited in Price, 1977; Dunn, 2000). Dunn, et al. (1993) classified learning styles into five categories:

1. The classroom environment
2. Emotionally
3. Sociological
4. Physiological strengths (auditory, visual, kinesthetic memory, intake—the need for snacks, or liquid while learning, time-of-day energy levels, and the need for mobility versus passivity)
5. Processing inclinations

There are five types of perceptual learning styles. (Tab. 1)

1. Auditory learners: Learning more effectively through the ear (hearing)
2. Visual learners: Learning more effectively through the eyes (seeing)
3. Tactile learners: Learning more effectively through touch (hands-on)
4. Kinesthetic learners: Learning more effectively through concrete complete body experience (whole-body movement)
5. Haptic learners: Learning more effectively through touch and whole-body involvement

(Reid, 1995)

**Tab.1 Activities that learners with different sensory preferences like(Dörnyei,2005; Felder & Henriques1995;Kinsella,1995;Kroonenberg,1995;Reid,1987; Oxford,2003;Oxford & Alderson,1995;Pritchard,2009;Tight,2010)**

Perceptual learning styles	Activities
Visual	Reading,studying charts,seeing images,looking at concrete objects, and perhaps even imagining mental pictures,diagrams,graphs,maps,posters and displays, timelines,films,demonstrations
Auditory	Audio tapes, lectures, conversations, oral directions, discussion, role-plays, and recitation
Hands-on (kinesthetic and tactile)	Working with tangible objects,media, and collages Physical activities,field trips Manipulating objects and other practical,first-hand experience Such learners generally find it helpful to do things like tap their pencil, walk around,underline,or even ride a stationary bike while studying.

### 3. Current perspective

Hyland (1993) examined 440 students' perceptual learning styles at 8 universities in Japan. The findings showed that Japanese students preferred auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, and individual learning as minor styles. No major style was identified. The results also showed that female students demonstrated stronger preferences than males in each modality. Banisaeid and Huang (2015) studied 204 Iranian EFL learners' perceptual learnings tyles, and the results showed that Iranian EFL learners prefer all perceptual learning style preferences, viz. , auditory,visual,kinesthetic, and tactile.

Rossi-Le (1995) studied 147 adult immigrants' perceptual learning styles(Chinese, Laotian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Cambodian, Japanese, Polish, and Korean). Using PLSPQ, she found major learning style preferences for tactile and kinesthetic modes and group learning. Reid(1987) explored percep-

tual learning style preferences among 43 university-affiliated English programs in the United States, where, 1,234 students from 98 countries strongly preferred kinesthetic and tactile learning styles. Chinese learners' style preferences were kinesthetic, tactile, auditory and visual learning. "When considering all the different types of learning styles, one must also consider culture"(Fierro,1997).

Rao(2000)studied 30 Chinese students' perceptions of communicative and non-communicative activities in the EFL classroom. Rao mentioned:

"Twenty-five subjects reported that their traditional learning styles and habits had prohibited them from being actively involved in communicative activities. As students have already been in school for at least 12 years by the time they enter university, they have become accustomed to the

traditional language teaching style, which is dominated by a teacher-centered, book-centered approach and an emphasis on rote memory" (p. 96).

On the other hand, Naserieh and Anani-Sarab (2013) mentioned that individual differences are often ignored in Iran, where there is an EFL setting.

"As for Iranian context, learning English as a required course starts at the second year of guidance school and continues up to the end of high school. However, due to different factors, such as the content of the textbooks, teachers' methodology and the evaluation system, high school students do not learn much English. The researchers

foud that most of their students did not have any successful English learning experiences, or they had an extreme fear of learning English when they were in junior high school" (Tabatabaei & Mashayekhi, 2013, p. 246)

Oxford(1995) declares that there is little or no research that investigates gender differences in visual and auditory styles. This study aims at finding out the perceptual modalities of Chinese and Iranian EFL learners. It is a comparative study in the case of Chinese and Iranian EFL learners, i. e. , to compare sets of data taken from two groups of Chinese and Iranian EFL learners regarding ages, gender, and degrees.

## 4. Methodology

### 4.1 Research questions

Is there any significant difference between perceptual learning styles of Chinese and Iranian EFL learners?

1. Do degrees (Masters or Bachelors) have any effect on Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles?

2. Is there any significant relationship between age, and Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles?

3. Is there any significant relationship between gender, and Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles?

### 4.2 Subjects

Three-hundred and thirty-one Chinese (154) and Iranian(177) EFL learners, who study English as their second language, at Zhejiang

University and Azad University of Tehran (Central Branch) took part in the study. Their native tongues are Chinese and Persian. They study English as a major at the universities. Both bachelors' and masters' degrees are chosen. They are chosen from the majors: English translation, literature, teaching, linguistics, and applied linguistics. Their mean age is 24.

### 4.3 Instrument

At first, there are seven questions (PL-SPQ) regarding the characteristics of the learners: name, age, e-mail, sex, degree, and major. The scale was developed by Joy Reid in 1987, who designed the survey to study the learning styles of ESL learners. The survey helped the students assess and determine their own preferred learning styles from among the six main learning style pref-

erences: visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, group and individual (Reid, 1987). The questionnaire consists of 30 items which was designed to elicit the six perceptual learning style preferences. The questionnaire is five Likert-point scale through which learners respond from strongly disagree(1) to strongly agree(5). Subjects are asked to consider such statements as "When the teacher tells me the instructions I understand better"; "When I do things in class, I learn better"; "When I read the instructions, I remember them better"; "When I work alone, I learn better". Since the subjects' major is English, they are proficient enough to understand the statements and hence the researchers did not translate the questionnaire into Chinese and Persian.

#### 4.4 Procedure and data analysis

The participants were chosen randomly

### 5. Results

#### 5.1 Descriptive statistics

The mean scores for auditory and visual modalities of Iranian EFL learners fell into the major category, while the mean scores of

from two universities in China and Iran during one year study. Then they were given the scale. In Azad University at Central Tehran, 201 questionnaires were distributed between the learners, but 177 of them were used in the study. Some did not return them back, and some did not answer all the items. In China, 170 questionnaires were distributed and 154 were filled completely. The time for responding to the scale was 15 minutes.

The data with respect to students' learning styles were collected through PL-SPQ. The data were analyzed by the Reid's (1995) scoring procedures, i. e., giving numeral value to each answer and categorizing major learning style, minor learning style, and those learning styles that are more negligible. Then the data were analyzed by using the SPSS software. Both descriptive and inferential statistics are considered.

the other perceptual learning styles fell into minor category (Tab. 2). This shows that Iranian EFL learners prefer activities that involve both reading and listening.

Tab. 2 Descriptive Statistics of learning style preferences of Iranian EFL learners (N=177)

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Type
Auditory	18.16	4.017	8.00	25.00	Major
Visual	18.22	3.657	9.00	25.00	Major
Kinesthetic	17.76	4.000	5.00	25.00	Minor
Tactile	17.20	4.243	7.00	25.00	Minor
Group	15.58	5.516	5.00	25.00	Minor
Individual	17.68	4.449	5.00	25.00	Minor

Note. 12.5 or less=Negligible; 12.5 to 18=Minor; above 18=Major.

The mean score for learning style preference of tactile of Chinese EFL learners fell into the major category, while the mean scores of the other perceptual learning styles fell into minor category (Tab. 3). This shows that Chinese EFL learners prefer activities that involve working with tangible objects and manipulation.

**Tab. 3 Descriptive statistics of learning style preferences of Chinese EFL learners (N=154)**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Type
Auditory	17.35	3.019	10.00	25.00	Minor
Visual	17.24	2.908	6.00	25.00	Minor
Kinesthetic	17.95	3.228	10.00	25.00	Minor
Tactile	18.09	3.602	9.00	25.00	Major
Group	15.73	3.915	6.00	25.00	Minor
Individual	17.25	3.925	7.00	25.00	Minor

Note. 12.5 or less=Negligible; 12.5 to 18.5=Minor; 18.5 and above=Major.

## 5.2 Inferential statistics

Six separate independent-sample t-tests were run to investigate whether the Iranian and Chinese participants perform differently on each of the six subscales on the Perceptual Learning Style Preference Questionnaire.

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to check whether there is a difference between the groups in terms of the scores

related to the auditory learning style preference. The result of the t-test revealed a significant difference in scores in favor of Iranian ( $M = 18.16$ ,  $SD = 4.02$ ) when compared with Chinese learners ( $M = 17.35$ ,  $SD = 3.02$ ),  $t(329) = 2.11$ ,  $p = .036$ . This indicates that Iranian participants were more oriented toward auditory learning styles than their Chinese counterparts (Tab. 4).

**Tab. 4 Independent sample t test for learning style preferences according to different nationalities (N=331)**

	Iranian (N=177)		Chinese (N=154)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD				Lower	Upper
Auditory	18.16	4.017	17.35	3.019	2.111	329	.036	.055	1.581
Visual	18.22	3.657	17.24	2.908	2.713	329	.007	.269	1.690
Kinesthetic	17.76	4.000	17.95	3.228	-.482	329	.630	-.973	.590
Tactile	17.20	4.243	18.09	3.602	-2.060	329	.040	-1.736	-.039
Group	15.58	5.516	15.73	3.915	-.281	329	.779	-1.171	.879
Individual	17.68	4.449	17.25	3.925	.913	329	.362	-.489	1.337

Also an independent-sample t-test was run to check whether there is a difference between the groups in terms of the scores related to the visual learning style prefer-

ence. The result of the t-test revealed a significant difference in scores in favor of Iranian ( $M = 18.22$ ,  $SD = 3.65$ ) when compared with Chinese learners ( $M = 1.24$ ,  $SD = 2.90$ ),  $t(329) = 2.71$ ,  $p = .007$ . This indicates that Iranian participants were more oriented toward visual learning styles than their Chinese students. Another independent-sample t-test was run and the result showed a significant difference in scores in favor of Chinese ( $M = 18.09$ ,  $SD = 3.60$ ) when compared to Iranian learners ( $M = 17.2$ ,  $SD = 4.24$ ),  $t(329) = -2.06$ ,  $p = .040$ . This shows that Chinese students prefer more tactile style than their Iranian counterparts.

The students of Master of Arts perform better on the questionnaire. That is to say, the mean score of the perceptual learning styles of them is higher than that of the students of Bachelor of Arts. This shows being involved in the learning situations and academic contexts is one factor that affects perceptual learning styles. The students of

Master of Arts in comparison to the

students of Bachelor of Arts are more oriented to work in groups. P value in all the learning styles except individual learning is less than .05 (see Tab. 5). Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to check whether there is a difference between master and bachelor students in terms of the scores related to the auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile and group learning styles. The result of the t-tests revealed a significant difference in scores in favor of master students ( $M = 18.16$ ,  $SD = 4.02$ ) when compared with bachelor learners. This indicates that master students were more oriented toward auditory ( $M = 18.45$ ,  $SD = 3.59$ ),  $t(329) = 3.140$ ,  $p = .002$ , visual ( $M = 18.49$ ,  $SD = 3.43$ ),  $t(329) = 3.713$ ,  $p = .000$ , kinesthetic ( $M = 18.49$ ,  $SD = 3.759$ ),  $t(329) = 2.979$ ,  $p = .003$ , tactile ( $M = 18.97$ ,  $SD = 3.891$ ),  $t(329) = 6.031$ ,  $p = .000$  and group learning styles ( $M = 16.83$ ,  $SD = 4.230$ ),  $t(329) = 4.227$ ,  $p = .000$  than their bachelor counterparts (Tab. 5).

**Tab. 5 Independent sample t-test for learning style preferences according to degree differences (N=331)**

	MA (N=178)		BA (N=153)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD				Lower	Upper
auditory	18.45	3.598	17.21	3.524	3.140	329	.002	.460	2.003
visual	18.49	3.439	17.14	3.170	3.713	329	.000	.634	2.064
kinesthetic	18.49	3.759	17.30	3.484	2.979	329	.003	.402	1.970
tactile	18.97	3.891	16.46	3.680	6.031	329	.000	1.693	3.332
group	16.83	4.757	14.64	4.674	4.227	329	.000	1.174	3.218
individual	17.05	4.230	17.85	4.174	-1.717	329	.087	-1.706	.115

Since the mean age of the subjects' is 23.97, the researchers regard 24 as the cut-point (Tab. 6).

**Tab. 6 Descriptive statistics of students' age**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
age	300	18.00	51.00	23.97	5.990
Valid N (listwise)	300				

Independent-sample t-tests were conducted to check whether there is a difference between the groups (those with age 24 and above and those with the age of less than 24) in terms of the scores related to six learning style preference. The result of the t-test revealed a significant difference in scores in favor of older students (auditory  $M = 18.46$ ,  $SD = 3.96$ ,  $df(298) = 2.54$ ,  $p = .012$ , visual  $M = 18.20$ ,  $SD = 3.540$ ,  $df(298) = 2.182$ ,  $p = .030$ , kinesthetic  $M = 18.41$ ,  $SD = 3.884$ ,  $df(298) = 2.296$ ,  $p = .022$ , tactile  $M = 18.72$ ,  $SD = 3.995$ ,  $df(298) = 3.738$ ,  $p = .000$ , group  $M = 16.37$ ,  $SD = 5.368$ ,  $df(298) = 2.031$ ) when compared with younger students (auditory  $M = 17.30$ ,  $SD = 3.304$ , visual  $M = 17.32$ ,  $SD = 3.187$ , kinesthetic  $M = 17.42$ ,  $SD = 3.391$ , tactile  $M = 16.96$ ,  $SD = 3.802$ , group  $M = 15.12$ ,  $SD = 4.509$ ). This indicates that older students were more oriented toward auditory, visual, kinesthetic, tactile, group the learning styles than those with the age below 24. Mean scores of perceptual learning styles of those with age 24 and above are higher than those with the age of less than 24. This shows that age is one of the main factors which affect perceptual learning styles, since older learners have more experience (Tab. 7).

**Tab. 7 Independent sample t-test for learning style preferences according to age differences (N=300)**

	>=24.00 (N=103)		<24.00 (N=197)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD				Lower	Upper
auditory	18.46	3.965	17.30	3.304	2.546	298	.012	.261	2.061
visual	18.20	3.540	17.32	3.187	2.182	298	.030	.086	1.671
kinesthetic	18.41	3.884	17.42	3.391	2.296	298	.022	.142	1.849
tactile	18.72	3.995	16.96	3.802	3.738	298	.000	.832	2.684
group	16.37	5.368	15.12	4.509	2.031	298	.044	.035	2.478
individual	17.19	4.300	17.60	4.157	-.801	298	.424	-.1.416	.596

An independent-sample t-test was conducted to check whether there is a difference between the groups (female and male) in terms of the scores related to the individual learning style preference. The result of the t-test revealed a significant difference in scores in favor of males ( $M = 18.32$ ,  $SD = 4.148$ ) when compared with female learners ( $M = 17.16$ ,  $SD = 4.158$ ),  $t(320) = -2.256$ ,  $p = .025$ . This shows males were more oriented toward individual learning than females (Tab. 8).

Tab. 8 Independent sample t-test for learning style preferences according to gender differences(N=322)

	female (N=230)		Male (N=92)		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	M	SD	M	SD				Lower	Upper
auditory	17.72	3.479	17.68	3.808	.084	320	.933	-.830	.904
visual	17.87	3.202	17.38	3.548	1.221	320	.223	-.304	1.299
kinesthetic	17.80	3.718	17.93	3.324	-.283	320	.777	-1.002	.750
tactile	17.51	3.912	17.81	4.010	-.613	320	.541	-1.254	.658
group	15.54	4.739	15.82	4.782	-.475	320	.635	-1.431	.875
individual	17.16	4.158	18.32	4.148	-2.256	320	.025	-2.165	-.147

### 5.3 Discussion

The findings of the study showed that Iranian EFL learners prefer activities that involve both reading and listening that are correspondent to the visual and auditory modes.

Furthermore, the study of Tabatabaei and Mashayekhi (2013) found that Iranian EFL learners preferred visual and auditory learning styles. The result of the study is dissimilar to the study by Naserieh and Sarab (2013), who explored the perceptual style among Iranian graduate students by using PLSPQ. The questionnaire was translated into Persian. One-hundred thirty-eight subjects from different faculty groups participated in the study. The findings showed that the participants favored kinesthetic and tactile modality, and group learning style. In contrast to Iranian EFL learners, Chinese EFL learners prefer tactile and kinesthetic styles, so they learn best by working with tangible objects and other practical, first-hand experiences. The findings of the study were consistent with the study by Melton (1990) who explored Chinese students' per-

ceptual learning style, and the results showed that Chinese students preferred kinesthetic, tactile, and individual learning style preferences. The finding was also in line with study by Reid (1987) who found that Chinese learners' style preferences were kinesthetic, tactile, auditory, and visual learning.

The finding of the study, by Rossi-Le (1995), was that Chinese students demonstrated very strong learning style preferences for visual learning. This finding contradicts the current study.

Based on the gender differences, there was no difference between the mean scores of perceptual learning styles of males and females. This is in line with the study of Tabatabaei and Mashayekhi (2013) who found that gender did not affect learning style preferences. The results can be deduced that age and degree have strong impact on the perceptual learning styles of both Iranian and Chinese EFL learners, i. e., the higher the age and degree, the more perceptual learning styles are preferred. As was mentioned in the introduction, perceptual learning styles are affected not only by the genes

a person receives from parents, but also by the experience one gains during his/her life; and these two discriminate any individual from others. More exposure to input, learning situations, and academic contexts are effective in gaining experience, and enhancing background knowledge. Anderson (1988) argues that different cultures produce different learning styles. He also mentions socio-cultural, and environmental factors as im-

portant elements in the development of any cultural style. Anderson (1988) states that "the behavior patterns possibly reflect differences in learning styles, and simultaneously contribute to differential academic performance". Experience is gained by social interactions in different contexts, where there is enough input to shape the culture (Fig. 1).

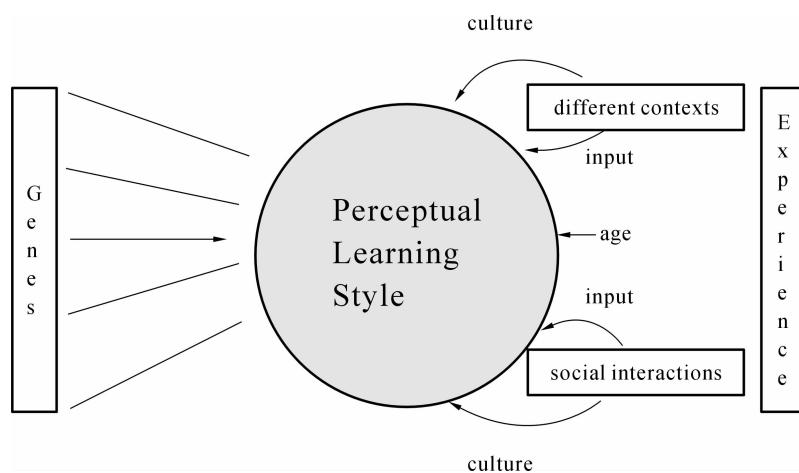


Fig. 1 Factors affecting perceptual learning styles

## 6. Conclusion and pedagogical implications

The purpose of the study was to investigate and compare Iranian and Chinese EFL learners' perceptual learning styles regarding their age and year of study English. All the participants are English majors (translation, literature, linguistics, second language acquisition, or applied linguistics) at the university level. Iranian EFL learners prefer visual and auditory styles, while Chinese EFL learners prefer tactile and kinesthetic style preferences. Since older learners have more experience, it is reported that older

EFL learners prefer more perceptual learning style preferences than younger learners. The reason is being involved in academic context and educational situation. Regarding gender, only males prefer to study individually when compared with females. Since learning style awareness predicts success in language learning and promotes it (Halbach, 2000), it is important to become familiar with the students' learning styles.

There are many reasons why both teachers and learners should recognize their

learning styles. Firstly, teachers' style should match with learners' styles to avoid mismatch. According to Felder and Henrques(1995), mismatch not only leads to low quality of students' learning, but also affects their attitude toward the class negatively; secondly, to become familiar with a variety of ways, different individuals learn a language. According to Guild(1994), "using information about culture and learning styles in sensitive and positive ways will help educators value, and promote diversity in all aspects of the school"; and thirdly, to accommodate all learning styles. According to Griggs(as cited in Fierro,1997), the accommodated learning styles improve attitude toward learning and have positive effect on productivity, academic achievement, and creativity. Finally, learners can benefit from knowing their own styles, which helps them to adjust and adopt themselves in different learning contexts. According to Bailey, et al. (2000) "students' ability to learn a foreign language may be moderated by their learning style". For example, if a language learner prefers activities related to the visual mode, he/she can adjust himself/herself to the auditory style by practicing listening tasks and negotiating conversations and discussions.

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# Use of Stance Adverbs in Academic English: A Comparison of L1 English and L1 Vietnamese Authors' Writing

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**Abstract:** The present study investigates authorial stance in research articles of native and non-native academic authors of English. It aims to analyze evaluation adverbs in research articles written by native authors of English (NAEs) and Vietnamese-speaking authors of English (VAEs) between 2012 and 2015. The data of 120 articles was investigated to examine whether there is a significant difference in using stance adverbs between the two groups of authors. It was found that NAEs and VAEs used stance adverbs in a considerably different way. Most of the stance adverb categories were variously overused by NAEs against VAEs. It was also found that English native authors of research articles preferred indirect approaches of expressing their evaluation by an illocutionary way of manner-of-speaking, metalinguistic and expectation markers, while Vietnamese authors favored an epistemic way of modal adverbs.

**Keywords:** Stance adverbs, Academic writing, Corpus-based, L1 English authors, L1 Vietnamese authors

## 1. Introduction

Academic writing has been considered as “a persuasive endeavor involving interaction between writers and readers” (Hyland, 2005:173) since the late 1980s. The way academic writers intervene in their texts to

present their findings and to evaluate these findings, comment on them, and build a solidarity with their readers are referred to as *evaluation* ( Huston & Thompson, 2000 ), stance ( Biber & Finegan, 1989; Hyland,

1999), *attitude* (Halliday, 1994) or *metadiscourse* (Crismore, 1989; Hyland & Tse, 2004). This line of research has attracted much attention in the literature from different approaches. Some research focuses on the interpersonal linguistic features such as reporting verbs, tense or voice choices (e. g. Thompson and Ye, 1991; Hood, 2012; Hyland, 2012), while others take specific approaches into authorial stance to investigate evaluative adjectives, adverbs/ adverbials or nouns in particular data with the purpose of comparing and contrasting the usage of them among different languages (e. g. Hyland, 2000; Jiang, 2015).

However, stance adverbs, also known as single word stance adverbials, have not attracted much attention. As Biber, et al. (1999, pp. 766-767) argued, writers “use stance adverbs to convey their judgments and attitudes, to claim the

factual nature of what they are saying, and to mark exactly how they mean their utterances to be understood”. Hence, the usage of evaluative adverbs may imply the difference in terms of English proficiency (between native and non-native speakers of English), cultures, and habits (among nations). Examining the divergence in using stance adverbs may help student writers to improve their academic writing and amend their persuasive interaction with readers.

In this article, we explore the ways stance adverbs are used in two corpora of 120 texts taken from published research articles written by Vietnamese-speaking academic authors of English and native speaking academic authors of English. We investigate the frequencies of evaluative adverbs and make a comparison of the ways Vietnamese and US/UK writers use them to express their viewpoints.

## 2. Stance adverbs: An overview of the literature

Stance adverbs have been studied exclusively (Biber, et al., 1999) or in relation to other linguistic expressions from various theoretical perspectives within the fields of semantics, syntax, pragmatics, translation and discourse analysis (e. g. , Biber & Finegan, 1988; Espinal, 1991; Zhen, 2000; Fitzmaurice, 2004; Simon-Vandenbergen & Ajimer, 2007; Sakita, 2013). Their use in discourse has been related to such phenomena as “hedging” (Hyland, 1998), “evidentiality” (Chafe, 1986; Rooryck, 2001a, 2001b), “evaluation” (Hunston & Thompson, 2000), and “appraisal” (Martin & White, 2005). For example, Brown and Levinson

(1987) studied some of these adverbs together with modal verbs and other hedging expressions as devices used for face-saving strategies within their proposed theory of politeness. In addition, studies such as Myers (1989) and Hyland (1998) investigated the use of such expressions as a strategy to negotiate the exchange of information between authors and readers in academic discourse. Meanwhile, stance adverbs can be used to qualify an utterance that expresses a point of view supported by some researchers (e. g. Tseronis 2009). Besides the aforementioned works, other researchers have paid attention to the usage of various types of stances a-

mong languages, especially emphasized the difference between native and non-native speakers of English(for example, Henderson & Barr, 2010; Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Agcam & Ozkan, 2015). However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has examined how VAEs use stance adverbs to express their points of view in academic research articles.

Biber, et al. (1999) distinguish three main types of stance adverbs based on semantic and pragmatic criteria, namely, epistemic adverbs, attitude adverbs, and style adverbs. Tseronis (2009) aims to identify the strategic function of the qualification of a standpoint by exploring the contribution of stance adverbs as a specific linguistic means in the argumentative discussions. He argues that a qualified standpoint depends on the choices that the arguer makes regarding the topical potential, the adaptation to the audience and the presentational devices (particularly stance adverbs) and contributes three ways of qualifying a stance point: *epistemic*, *evaluative* and *illocutionary*. It is worth noting that Tseronis's (2009) study, different from Biber, et al. 's(1999), focuses on single-word adverbs as being about the propositional content of the assertive or about the performance of that assertive instead of a comment about an element of a clause. In the present study, therefore, we follow Tseronis's (2009)idea to collect and clas-

sify the stance adverbs from academic research articles.

Almeida (2012), by investigating sentential evidential adverbs and authorial stance in a corpus of English computing articles, found that there is a preference to use adverbs in the field of clarity and obviousness, concurrently argued that the epistemic meaning of the inquired adverbs is a pragmatic effect, which leads to categorizing them in the domain of evidentiality. However, these findings were based on only four found adverbs: *clearly*, *intuitively*, *obviously* and experimentally. Besides, Adams & Quintana-Toledo (2013) explored the predominant occurrence of epistemic stance adverbials (especially the expression of doubt and uncertainty), but limited their study in the introduction and conclusion sections of legal research articles. Those limitations make the research into stance adverbs (or adverbials) unsatisfied, thus, in this paper, we seek for a broader range of stance adverbs in bigger corpora with more disciplines. All stance adverbs from 120 texts of four disciplines will be investigated in order to provide a clearer picture of the use of stance adverbs in academic English, especially its differences between two groups of unlike L1 background.

### 3. Research questions and methods

#### 3.1 Research questions

Following Tseronis's (2009) framework

of stance adverbs, the present study focused on a detailed comparative analysis of the use of stance adverbs in English academic arti-

cles written by native English and Vietnamese authors from 2012 to 2015. That is, this study aimed to investigate whether Vietnamese authors and English native authors use the same adverb types to express their evaluations or not. Particularly, the following research question is to be addressed:

Do Vietnamese and English native writers of academic research articles make use of stance adverbs in a significantly different way in term of frequency, distribution, and discipline?

### 3.2 Corpora used in the study

A total of 120 research articles written by English and Vietnamese authors from the field of Computer Sciences, Physics, Sociology, and Linguistics between 2012 and 2015 constituted the corpus of this study (NACE and VACE, respectively). Due to the limitation of academic research articles written by Vietnamese authors, all empirical data-driven RAs with an IMRD format in international journals were chosen.

It is noteworthy that not all sections of the articles were included in the corpora. That is, we excluded abstracts, keywords, acknowledge, references, all tables, figures, and formulas, and focused on the body of the academic research articles, i. e. , sections of introduction, literature review, method, result, discussion and conclusion. As for the size, each set of the corpus comprised 60 texts extracted from Physics, Computer Sciences, Sociology and Linguistics research articles (each discipline contained 15 texts).

The statistics of the corpora are reported in Tab. 1.

**Tab. 1 Statistics of the corpus used in the study**

Corpus	No. of Articles	No. of words
NACE (L1)	60	394561
VACE (L2)	60	279655
Total	120	674216

### 3.3 Data analysis

The data analysis involves the following four steps. First, we used the Stanford CoreNLP to lemmatize and part-of-speech tag the corpus data. Second, we wrote a script with Python to extract the adverbs of the data from each discipline of the corpora and to calculate the frequency of the adverbs. Third, we manually categorize the adverbs based on Tseronis's (2009) categorization of adverbs for qualifying a standpoint. Last, we used Log-Likelihood Calculator (Rayson and Garside, 2000) to compare the frequencies of the adverbs in order to examine whether there is any difference between the use of adverbs by native English and Vietnamese authors. The adverbs examined in the study are listed in Tab. 2. As can be seen in Tab. 2, three categories of stance adverbs were identified based on Tseronis's (2009) categorization. The categories were further divided into seven subcategories, i. e. , modal adverbs, evidential adverbs, domain adverbs, evaluative adverbs, manner-of-speaking, metalinguistic, and expectation markers.

**Tab. 2 Stance adverbs examined in the study**

Epistemic way of qualifying (Adverbs commenting on the commitment)	MODAL ADVERBS	arguably, assuredly, certainly * ①, clearly * , conceivably, definitely, doubtless, evidently, for certain, improbably, incontestably, incontrovertibly, maybe, no doubt, perhaps, possibly, presumably, probably, surely * , undoubtedly
	EVIDENTIAL ADVERBS	allegedly, apparently, manifestly, obviously * , ostensibly, patently, purportedly, reportedly, reputedly, seemingly, supposedly, visibly
	DOMAIN ADVERBS	aesthetically, architecturally, biologically, chemically, commercially, culturally, ecologically, economically, emotionally, environmental, ethically, financially, formally, ideally, ideologically, intellectually, linguistically, logically, materially, mechanically, mentally, morally, officially, physically, politically, practically, privately, psychologically, racially, realistically, scientifically, sexually, socially, spiritually, statistically, superficially, technically, technologically, theoretically, unofficially
Evaluative way of qualifying (Adverbs commenting on the evaluation)	EVALUATIVE ADVERBS	bizarrely, commendably, conveniently, curiously, disappointingly, fortunately, funnily, happily, hopefully, illogically, interestingly, ironically, justifiably, justly, luckily, oddly, paradoxically, preferably, regrettably, regrettably, sadly, significantly, strangely, surprisingly, tragically, unaccountably, unfortunately, unhappily, unreasonably
Illocutionary way of qualifying (Adverbs commenting on the performance of the whole act)	MANNER-OF-SPEAKING	bluntly, candidly, confidentially, frankly, honestly, really, seriously, truly, truthfully
	METALINGUISTIC	basically, briefly, broadly, figuratively, generally, hypothetically, literally, metaphorically, objectively, personally, roughly, simply, strictly
	EXPECTATION MARKERS	actually, admittedly, avowedly, factually, in effect, in fact, in reality, indeed, naturally, of course, certainly * , clearly * , obviously * , surely *

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Stance adverbs in two corpora

verbs in the two corpora are described in Tab. 3.

Frequency distributions of stance ad-

① There is still no argument about the labels used and the adverbs that fall under each. The category of these adverbs depends on their discourse effect in certain context.

Tab. 3 Frequency distributions of stance adverbs in two corpora

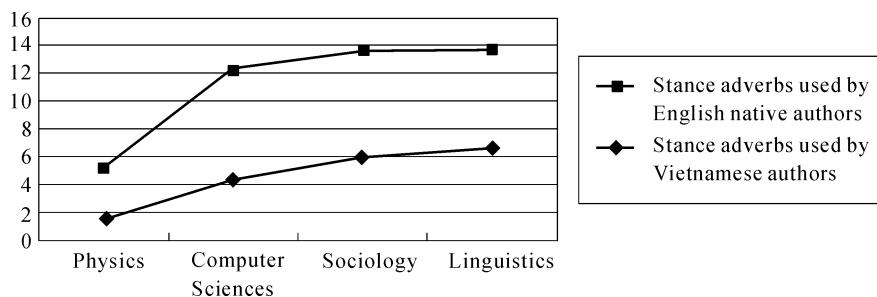
	Number of stance adverbs	Items per 10000 words	% of total		Number of stance adverbs	Items per 10000 words	% of total
NAEs	1188	30.11		VAEs	586	20.95	
Modal	253	6.41	21.3	Modal	119	4.25	20.3
Evidential	37	0.94	3.11	Evidential	31	1.11	5.29
Domain	192	4.87	16.16	Domain	121	4.33	20.65
Evaluative	201	5.09	16.92	Evaluative	113	4.04	19.28
Manner of Speaking	76	1.93	6.4	Manner of Speaking	28	1.0	4.78
Metalinguistic	255	6.46	21.46	Metalinguistic	113	4.04	19.28
Expectation markers	174	4.41	14.65	Expectation markers	61	2.18	10.41

There are some similarities and differences between two corpora with regard to the functional classes of stance adverbs. In NACE, modal and metalinguistic adverbs accounted for the highest level of frequency, then domain, evaluative adverbs, and expectation markers took the second place of occurrence times. Evidential adverbs and manner-of-speaking occurred least among all stance adverbs (0.94 times and 1.93 times per 10,000, respectively). In VACE, modal and metalinguistic adverbs stood in the list of the most frequent ones, along with domain and evaluate adverbs. Evidential adverbs and manner-of-speaking rarely occurred in research articles written by Vietnamese authors. It seems that Vietnamese authors and English native authors have the same preference in using stance adverbs to express their viewpoints. However, it is clear that NAEs used more frequently than VAEs did, except for evidential adverbs. For example, modal adverbs appeared 6.41 times

in every 10,000 words in NACE while 4.25 times in VACE. Expectation markers occurred twofold in NACE than in VACE (per 10,000 words). Moreover, NAEs preferred illocutionary stance adverbs (12.8 times per 10,000 words) meanwhile VAEs used epistemic adverbs more (9.69 times per 10,000 words)

In addition, the usage of stance adverbs by two groups of authors differed in unlike disciplines (Fig. 1). Physics was the field where stance adverbs were not preferred using to express authors' viewpoints. Meanwhile, they were utilized effectively in computer sciences and in social science areas. In VACE, Linguistic articles contained the largest amount of evaluation adverbs while it was Sociological articles in NACE.

In order to reveal whether these differences are statistically considerable or not, the two corpora were administered log-likelihood tests. The results are outlined in Tab. 4.



**Fig. 1 Use of stance adverbs per 10,000 words through different disciplines**

**Tab. 4 Log-likelihood results for stance adverb types in two corpora**

	NACE	VACE	LL Ratio (* p<0.05)
Modal adverbs	253	119	+14. 21
Evidential adverbs	37	31	+0. 47
Domain adverbs	182	121	+0. 30
Evaluative adverbs	201	113	+3. 96
Manner-of-speaking adverbs	76	28	+9. 56
Metalinguistic adverbs	255	113	+18. 21
Expectation markers	174	61	+24. 68

There was the significant dissimilarity in the usage of stance adverbs by Vietnamese authors and English native authors in academic research articles (Tab. 5). In particular, modal, evaluative, manner-of-speak-

ing, metalinguistic adverbs and expectation markers were underused by VAEs. Evidential and domain adverbs were employed in an inconsiderably different way, though.

**Tab. 5 Log-likelihood results for stance adverbs in different disciplines**

	NACE	VACE	LL Ratio (* p<0.05)
Physics	173	48	+38. 54
Computer Sciences	337	145	+26. 76
Sociology	327	176	+8. 89
Linguistics	351	217	+2. 53

Besides, stance adverbs were also used in a significantly different way in unlike disciplines. Interestingly, although these adverbs were not utilized in Physics as much as other fields, the difference there was biggest. Meantime, the difference in using

stance adverbs in Linguistic articles was unremarkable. All these findings were approved by statistical results ( $p<0.05$ ).

#### 4.2 Evaluative adverbs

There were only 9 out of 26 types of

stance adverbs used for commenting on the evaluation in VACE and 13 out of 26 used in NACE (Fig. 2). It is not surprising that NAEs made use of evaluative adverbs more variously than VAEs did. The most frequent-

ted evaluative adverb across two corpora is *significantly*, which appeared 139 times in NACE and 69 times in VACE. The following examples are extracted from two corpora to clarify the usage of the item.

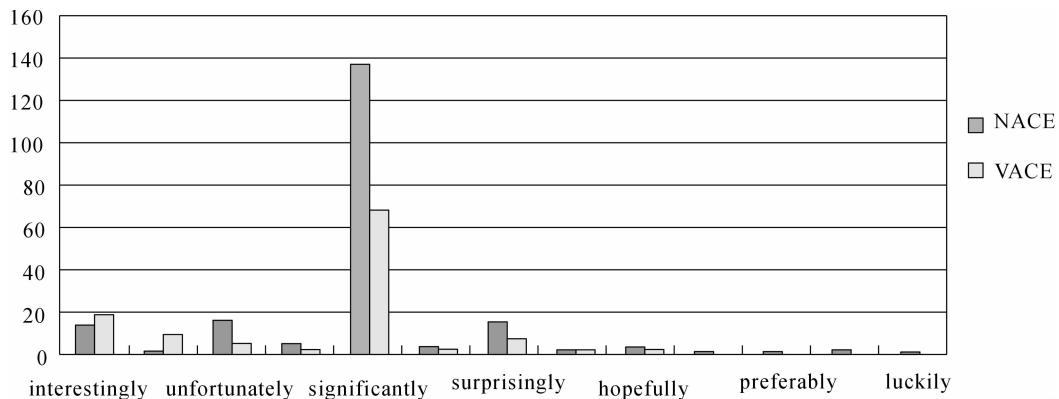


Fig. 2 Evaluative adverbs found in two corpora

[These three factors appear to contribute significantly to the determination of the classification label.]

Extracted from NACE-COM-01

[In particular, learning through film has significantly contributed to students' increased awareness of their own cultural biases, which is the foundation for their growth in construing cultural differences, moving towards a more ethnorelative attitude and

engaging in personal intercultural changes.]

Extracted from VACE-LIN-03

Interestingly, there were two types of evaluative adverbs: *interestingly* and *fortunately* that VAEs overused against NAEs. Meanwhile, native academic authors of English preferred to use adverbs expressing the unexpectedness, like *unfortunately*, *surprisingly*.

## 5. Discussion

The research question of the study was formed to see whether Vietnamese-speaking academic authors of English and native speaking academic authors of English make use of stance adverbs in a significantly different way. The findings have indicated that generally there is a striking difference regarding the usage of these items by NAEs and VAEs. Vietnamese speaking authors of

English used stance adverbs less frequently than NAEs in most categories and functional classes except for evidential and domain adverbs, which was confirmed by the results of statistical analysis ( $P < 0.05$ ). In particular, modal adverbs, evaluative adverbs, manner-of-speaking, metalinguistic adverbs and expectation markers were underused by VAEs against NAEs. Among adverbs of commen-

ting on the commitment, only their usage of modal adverbs was proven to be different. It pointed that both NAEs and VAEs did not prefer to use evidential adverbs to qualify their standpoint. In another word, emphasizing the quality of evidence that the authors are ready to forward in support of their viewpoints are not favored by both groups of authors. This finding is similar to Adams & Quintana-Toledo's (2013) result that the expression of doubt and uncertainty rather than certainty is favored but especially in conclusions. Illocutionary way of qualifying a standpoint was utilized differently by VAEs and NAEs. Vietnamese speaking authors of English used adverbs commenting on the performance of the whole act with the smaller level of frequency than native authors of English did. However, all functional classes of this stance adverbs category were exploited to emphasize the quality of the evidence. It is worth noticing that this way of qualifying achieve the same effect as epistemic way but only in an indirect way. It means academic authors of research articles favored to allude the quality of the evidence

by referring to the readers' cooperativeness. The statistical result reveals that there was a preference in using epistemic adverbs by Vietnamese authors, which means that VAEs tended to directly give their commitment to the truth/falsity of the proposition. These above difference might be because, in all academic programs for Vietnamese graduate students, there is no course related to academic English writing or research article style of writing. Vietnamese authors might not have a chance to know concretely about the objectivity of a research article and avoid the voice of the author.

It was also confirmed with statistical results that VAEs and NAEs used stance adverbs differently in different disciplines except for linguistics. NAEs overused stance adverbs in Physics, Computer Sciences, and Sociology against VAEs. It is interesting that even two groups of authors used least stance adverbs in the Physic articles but it was still different while lots of stance adverbs were employed in Linguistic articles but there was no considerable difference.

## 6. Conclusions

Our study shows that the usage of stance adverbs by Vietnamese-speaking academic authors of English and native academic authors of English was significantly different in general. NAEs used stance adverbs more frequently and variously than VAEs did, especially modal adverbs, evaluative adverbs, manner-of-speaking, metalinguistic

and expectation markers. NAEs particularly used many different evaluative adverbs and focused more on the unexpected information, meanwhile, VAEs used a limited number of that adverbs and left their evaluation on the positive one. In addition, English native authors of research articles preferred to give their comment indirectly by using il-

locutionary way to emphasize the quality of evidence. Epistemic and evaluative ways, which might impose authors' opinions on readers, were not favored in qualifying a standpoint by NAEs. Vietnamese authors, however, tended to exploit epistemic adverbs for expressing their points of view. This result may be applied in the field of language teaching as a suggestion that student should be provided research papers written by native authors and asked to rewrite their previous papers using more adverbs commenting on the performance of the whole act to express their viewpoints similar to the ones that are found in those research papers. This study is limited to the investigation into authorial stance adverbs in two corpora including Physic, Computer Science, Sociology and Linguistic research articles written by native and Vietnamese-speaking academic authors of English between 2012 and 2015.

For more generalizable results, firstly it might be furthered to expand the corpora size and conclude research papers written by academic authors with another L1 background for comparing three corpora. Secondly, further study might be conducted on research papers published in other disciplines than/ in addition to the one examined in this study.

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# **Fostering Learning Autonomy in Teacher-Student Co-Constructive Dialogue: An Example from a Chinese Language Class for International Students in China**

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**Abstract:** “Learner autonomy is an achievement, attained inter-relationally between the learner and the teacher”[1]. Therefore, the role of the instructor often plays a crucial role in fostering autonomous learning regarding the teachers’ instructive language, activity design, choice of material, etc. However, mismatched philosophy of language learning often exists among students and instructors, which hinders the success of promoting learning autonomy.

This paper looks at learning activities in a Chinese language class for international students in a Chinese university, and the formation of the students' autonomous learning. It examines the problems that occurred during class, and the teacher's later modification of activities. Based on the student-student and student-teacher interactions during the class, the paper touches upon issues arising from the observation of class activities, which include self-perception of identity in the target language speech communities, learning motivation, and effective language learning strategies. These issues all contribute to the formation of learner autonomy.

The paper concludes that as a co-collaborator in the process of autonomous learning, the role of teacher in fostering learner autonomy is to implement a teacher-learner co-constructive dialogue to approach learners' perception of who they are in the speech community of the target language, why learning the language, and what constitutes good language learning.

**Keywords:** Collaboration, Identity, Learner autonomy, Learning strategy, Motivation

## I. Introduction

Firstly known as the ability to take responsibility of one's own learning<sup>[2]</sup>, learner autonomy is never a monologue of students or teachers. Although learner autonomy is commonly associated with "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action" in learning<sup>[3][4]</sup>, it "does not mean learning alone in isolation"<sup>[5]</sup>. On the contrary, it involves successful combination of instruction, learning activities and students-teacher negotiation on learning. Along with the ideas and researches in language education, this paper explores the practice and possible problems arising from a current Chinese language class, with themes focusing on autonomous learning related to identity, motivation, and perspective on good language learning strat-

egies.

I started to teach the targeted class, "Advanced Chinese Speaking" class in the spring of 2016. The class was situated in a Chinese university, and was offered through the School of International Students Education. The 7 adult students aged from 18-25 in the class were of intermediate level. They have all passed HSK4 before entering the class. The class met once a week for 90 minutes every Tuesday afternoon, and lasted for 12 weeks. The students were in non-degree-seeking language program. The instructional language of the class was mostly Chinese and occasionally English. Here is the demography of the students (Tab. I); all the names used are pseudo-names.

**Tab. I The students' demography**

Name	Nationality	L1 and other foreign languages	Gender	Age
Sue	Kazakhstan	Kazakh&Russian, English	Female	18
Helen	Congo	French & English	Female	20
Maria	Congo	French & English	Female	24
Jun	Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan language&Russian, English	Male	19
Dragon	Côte d'Ivoire	French & English	Male	25
Matt	Côte d'Ivoire	French & English	Male	22
Jacky	Yemen	Arabic & English	Male	20

## II. Identity and autonomy

Norton (1995) points out that the language they use shapes people's identities<sup>[6]</sup>. As the students in my class came from different countries and had diverse backgrounds, each held a different idea of their own identity at the beginning of class.

Meanwhile, although the class was international, I cannot overlook the fact that they were all multilingual individuals that lived in a cross-cultural environment.

An activity I used to encourage autonomous learning was a discussion around healthy living habits. Students were supposed to look at a daily routine on the textbook and discuss if it is healthy or not. The activity was designed with hope to engage students in self-directed discussion to learn the language by communicating with each other. I thought students would spend much time on the daily routine such as “get up at 7, go to school at 8, etc.”, and focus on when to do these things every day. Yet to my surprise, the most heated part of the discussion was when students commented on the living habits provided in the textbook. When I walked around the classroom to hear their discussion, I heard students constantly compare the living habits in their hometown with the daily routine presented in the textbook. During the discussion, they shared the similarities in living habits among their countries and China, and talked about their experience of cultural differences in China.

For example, I heard conversation like this from two African students:

“中国人很早起床。(Chinese people get up so early.)”“对,6点或者7点起床。(Yeah, 6 or 7 o'clock, that is so early.)”

“我觉得早起早睡不健康,晚点儿起床更舒服。(I don't think getting up early and sleeping early is healthy; getting up late feels better.)”

“他们早起早睡,因为中国人晚上不常去酒吧和party。(They don't have much night

life; they don't like to go to bars or parties; that's the reason.)”

Or conversation between an African student and an Uzbekistan student:

“我们国家的学生8点上学,不是7:30,你觉得这个(7:30)好吗?(We go to school at 8, not 7:30. Do you think it's reasonable?)”

“真的吗,在我的国家,和中国是一样的,高中学生7:30上学。(Oh, really? It is the same for us; high school starts at 7:30.)”

“是的,宿舍旁边有一个小学,我每天很早就可以听见音乐。(Yeah, there is a primary school near the dorm, and music starts early every morning.)”

Instead of focusing on the particular routine in the textbook, when the topic switched towards different living habits in different countries, students contributed actively to the discussion.

As mentioned by Gibson(2004), certain linguistic practices are more appropriate than others under members' community of practice<sup>[7]</sup>. Hence, students tend to be more natural and active with linguistic medium or language style that agrees with shared identity. As mentioned before, students from international background were also individuals with rich cross-cultural experience, such aspects of their identities should be taken into account and those favored linguistic practices should be used more often to trigger students' interest and attention. Although the above activity seemed to not go as planned, since students were not actually commenting on whether the daily routine is healthy, yet they actively contributed to the discussion of cultural differences, in which

they also reviewed the time and activity vocabulary, sentence structures, and shared views on topics they all indicated interest.

Even though students shared different ethnic and national identities at first, through several other activities like this in which the intercultural aspects of a topic were strengthened, the class gradually became a speech community that cared about cultural differences. And students gradually formed a critical awareness about intercultural differences, as well as built a shared identity as part of the international family. This discovery of identity enhanced their learning potential and enabled them to become more independent language learners.

At week 10, when the class is approaching the final, the students were able to use the language structures presented in the textbook flexibly, but more importantly, they learned to share and embrace the differences in this international community, and

they could engage in cross-cultural communication without bias. Hence, by incorporating discussion on intercultural topics, I wish that my classroom could become “a desired community that offers possibilities for an enhanced range of identity options in the future”<sup>[8]</sup>.

Barillaro (2011) points out that “it is vital that language instructors are involved in examining the definition of autonomy and exploring classroom approaches and practices suitable and relevant to their educational setting”<sup>[9]</sup>. As for the class of international students, teachers should guide students to find a shared identity in this new speech community, that is, the new country, living environment, and new class. It is important to implement detailed examination of how “international cultural backgrounds influence learners as well as how this influence may be modified by their ongoing engagement with target language cultures”<sup>[10]</sup>.

### III. Motivation and autonomy

Motivation generally refers to the desire to initiate L2 learning and the effort employed to sustain it<sup>[11]</sup>. It is often measured by complex variables, and L2 motivation is largely related with achievement in language learning. It could also be a strong trigger in learner autonomy, since if students are highly motivated, they would be more desirable to learn and take more initiative.

Ever since we started the class, I came to notice a phenomenon that two students, Jun and Sue were always writing characters when there was a discussion or speaking ac-

tivity. These students were not weak in coursework. In fact, they had quite good exam record, and according to their written homework, they mastered vocabulary and sentence structures very well. However, since it was a speaking class, students were expected to practice oral communication, thus these two students’ in-class performance was not satisfactory.

In week 4, I scheduled an interview with these students. We talked about how they arranged self-study time, why they took this course, and their expectation for them-

selves. (Tab. II)

Tab. II Interview with the Students

Questions	Jun's response	Sue's response
How do you use your spare time to study Chinese?	Doing model test questions Memorize characters and vocabulary Homework Recite textbook articles	Doing exercises Listening questions Reading quiz Write characters Homework
Why do you take this course?	I passed HSK 4 so it is a required course for me	I want to improve my Chinese to a higher level
What's your expected outcome after this term?	Pass HSK 6	Pass HSK 6 Apply to graduate study in China

According to the interview, their main goal for studying Chinese was to pass the HSK exam and go to a Chinese university. Since the exam focuses more on grammar, vocabulary and writing, and they found the most difficult part is writing characters, so they wanted to practice more writing. But in the advanced speaking class, most of the activities were speaking, thus they were less interested in participating.

I began to wonder if everyone held the same view. So in week 6, we had a lesson about Chinese learning experience. The students listened to an article about a speaker's Chinese learning: Why she learned it, how it was first, and how it was later. Then, they were asked to imitate and prepare a similar speech. This was an opportunity for me to know about the motivation of the whole class. To sum up their speech on their learning experience, the major motivation for these adult learners were divided into two types: First, to pass the HSK exam in order to apply to a Chinese university; second, to be able to communicate with Chi-

nese, which will give them advantage on the job market when they return to their own countries or find a job in China.

I matched their motivation with their class performances (Tab. III), and found that the students responded differently to learning activities. Those whose goal was the exam tended to pay less attention to in-class speaking and discussion, but did better in written drills or other textbook exercises, while those who wanted to communicate with Chinese were more actively participating in speaking. Yet I found that there was obviously a lack of realization of the relationship between the purpose of activities and their learning goal. For these exam seekers, speaking may not seem important at the first glance; the fact is that when they enter a university in China, they will need to communicate orally in all kinds of campus situation. Speaking would be the first skill they need to get along in the Chinese university. I realized that in order to help them fully achieve their aim, I need to make them aware that the things we did in class were

actually in accordance with their motives.

**Tab. III Motivation and Class Performance**

Name	Major motivation for learning Chinese	Group discussion	Vocabulary quiz	Written work	Answer oral questions
Sue	Enter Chinese University for undergraduate study	Quiet	Good	Very good	Seldom answer
Helen	Work with Chinese people	Actively participate	Very good	Good	Actively answer
Maria	Find a job in Chinese oversea company	Actively participate	Very good	Very good	Actively answer
Jun	Pass HSK 6 and Enter a good Chinese University	Very quiet	Very good	Very good	Seldom answer
Dragon	Continue his previous job in a Chinese oversea company	Actively participate	Fair	Fair	Actively answer
Matt	Work with Chinese	Actively participate	Fair	Fair	Actively answer
Jacky	Apply to a medical school in China	Fairly active	Good	Fair	Seldom answer

Simply telling people what to do is not persuasive. Therefore, I intentionally incorporated lives at Chinese university into our class. By doing this, I aimed to make those who were less excited about oral activities realize the importance of speaking skill if they want to study in China. I encouraged the students to experience the real campus life outside the international-student-only classroom through assigning tasks that involved interviewing Chinese students, writing diary about the school events, etc. For instance, during the sports meeting, I asked them to interview at least 2 Chinese student athletes, and write down their interview. I also invited Chinese students to our class to work as teaching assistants and act as the classmates of these international students; they will discuss questions and solve problems together. It gave them a real sense of what studying in China together with Chinese students is like. A negotiation of moti-

vation existed in these learning activities, which made some students re-examine their goals, and how to get there. The students could realize by themselves that the importance of speaking is as much as writing. And those who did not actively participate in speaking activities showed more enthusiasm gradually in later classes.

Furthermore, since known from previous discussion, the students' motivations were mainly practical goals related to career and study, which was instructional motivation. While instructional motivation is indeed a strong trigger, integrative motivation is said to be the highest and most facilitative motivation for language learners<sup>[12][13]</sup>. Integrativeness refers to an openness to identify, at least in part, with another language community<sup>[14]</sup>. These activities which enabled the students to engage and get involved with the target language community also served the purpose of developing a sense of

belonging and favorable attitude towards the Chinese community and culture. As the integrativeness for the target language grows, I hope the students could be better motivated, and more willing to actively learn knowledge related to the target language<sup>[15]</sup>.

Motivation is not the same for everyone or at any time, it relates to "who learns what in what milieu"<sup>[16]</sup>. Autonomous learning occurs most when learning agrees with motivation, that is, when students find learning suits their goals and are most willing to practice it. To understand students' motivation and needs, teachers need to constantly exchange ideas with students, through inter-

views, surveys or casual talk, to get to know their goals and plans. Offering learning contents that fit their motivation works best for developing learner autonomy. Meanwhile, it is essential to negotiate with students about their motivation. They need guidance to reconsider and to find the relationship of learning activities and their motives, and thus become independent learners who could discover their own role and focus in learning. In addition, motivation can be developed. It is teachers' role to lead students to discover the integrativeness towards language learning through interacting with the target language groups.

## IV. Effective learning strategy and autonomy

Learning strategy refers to operations used by learners to aid the acquisition, storage and retrieval of information<sup>[17]</sup>. Better language learners could use a variety of learning strategies that fit their individual characteristics such as personality, motivation, stage of learning, learning environment, etc.<sup>[18]</sup>. Appropriate learning strategies help students become more independent, autonomous, and lifelong learners<sup>[19][20][21]</sup>.

Learner autonomy belongs to the internal factors of the learners, and the strategies used to enhance learner autonomy is largely subject to individual differences, which creates much difficulty for instructors to coach certain style of strategic learning in class. As could be seen from previous discussion, the students already showed awareness of their choices on certain strategies; some prefer cognitive strategy such as writing and mem-

orizing vocabulary, and some prefer a more interactive way, such as discussion and problem-solving.

At first, I tried to explain clearly the purpose and instruction for every task and assignment, however, the result of instruction was not quite good, since the students demonstrated certain preferences to different tasks, and ignored or paid less attention to others. For instance, the students gave excuses and reasons for their ignorance to certain assignments.

*"I am sorry that I did not do this task because I have not got enough time, and I did others first."*

*"Sorry, I felt uncomfortable physically and wanted some rest, but I did finish some of it."*

The excuses showed that the students

put certain learning activities prior to others. Rivera-Mills and Plonksy (2007) suggest that time be set aside for identifying and evaluating learners' beliefs about learning<sup>[22]</sup>, and I find that developing an on-going dialogue around this issue constructive, for it fosters the bi-directional flow of ideas and create equal opportunities for learners to choose their roles in learning instead of being passive recipients of instruction. While it was hard to expect everyone to follow the same learning strategy, a negotiation of strategy was found in assignments and tasks in class. Since week 4, I started to offer options for learning strategy.

As assignment is an important part for students to study by themselves. I began to give them very open-ended assignments, such as preparing a very short presentation around certain topics every week. Before they complete the homework, I could recommend some ways to gather resources, and offer suggestions for some strategies, but it was up to the students to decide which they would use. Meanwhile, because different students could choose different strategies, they often engaged in discussion to share their learning experience during class break or before the weekly presentation, to learn from their peers about how to learn. To complete the weekly presentation, the students needed to look for various resources by themselves, summarize by their own research, present their products using their own means. The presentation showed that each student enjoyed different learning strategies and focused on different parts of learning. Some presented lots of audio and

visual materials such as films, movies, and they could learn a lot from interacting with these authentic language materials. Some preferred to analyze the written articles they found on the Internet, make summary, etc.

I also made some modifications on how the class activities were carried out. When I initiated an activity, I would offer more options for students, such as which role they would take in the activity, and how they would like to practice. For example, before a role play, I put the students in groups, and told them that this activity requires them to write a good play and conversation, and they should act it out naturally. Those who preferred strategies such as writing and analyzing could probably be the play writer who designs the structure of sentences and lines, and those who liked to learn through communication would pay more attention on fluent speaking and acting. Everyone found their position, and got something meaningful to do, so that all the students were participating in learning in different ways.

Offering options of different strategies is an implicit dialogue with students about how they learn. For language instructors, it is hard to simply demand students using certain type of strategy, but what can be done is to teach them when to use these strategies through practice and by letting them try. By selecting the appropriate strategies for their own learning, students constantly engage in an active exploration of the most effective learning strategy, and their learning autonomy tends to grow. They would be able to choose how to reach the expected learning outcome according to their individual char-

acteristics, thus becoming the master of their own learning.

## V. Conclusion and reflection

A student-centered classroom has entitled instructors with more possible roles in the process of teaching and learning, and I'm gradually getting used to joining the class as a facilitator, observer and co-participant instead of assuming the status of sole authority and dominance. This transformation of ideology contributes to the formation of autonomous learning. Kojima (2012) describes this collaborative relationship between learners and instructors as "positive interdependence"<sup>[23]</sup>. It captures the "proactive autonomy"<sup>[24]</sup> in the nature of autonomous learning: The collaborative learning requires teachers to scaffold along the track of the learners' progress, and learners are capable of conducting independent inquiry into the language knowledge given the appropriate assistance.

To conclude, fostering learner autonomy is a teacher-student co-collaboration process. Autonomous learning is better achieved through constant conversations and communication regarding identity, motivation, effective learning strategies, and many other issues that still need to be explored under more contexts.

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# Defining Teacher Autonomy in EFL Classroom Teaching—An Empirical Study of Teacher Talk in EFL Classes of a Chinese Primary School

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**Abstract:** This article reports an empirical study of teacher autonomy in EFL classroom teaching. The study material is recorded in a Chinese primary school about an experienced teacher whom we assume can give full play to teacher autonomy. Applying mediation theory as the framework, we explore how teacher autonomy is realized. In mediation theory teachers are regarded as mediators, whose function is to integrate multiple elements in a student-centered class. Mediation theory allows us to analyze teacher autonomy in a multiple relation system. We are going to analyze the video in a 3-dimensional system within which the teacher acts as a mediator and performs autonomy: task, material and interaction. Then we come up with several principles in each dimension and see how these principles are observed in the video and explore if there is better realization of teacher autonomy.

**Keywords:** Teacher autonomy, Mediation theory, Empirical study

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, “autonomy” has become a noticeable trend in foreign language teaching. Autonomy was initially used in foreign language learning and gradually developed into learner autonomy/learning autonomy and teacher autonomy/teaching autonomy, etc. Many well-known experts in foreign language teaching have implemented related

researches on autonomy (Little, 1995; Littlewood, 1996; Benson, 2007; Lamb, 2008, etc.), showing that autonomy has become a new researching orientation. The concept of “autonomy” was imported into domestic research at the beginning of 21st century, attracting a number of researchers’ attention. For instance, Wu (2004), Huang & Benson

(2007), Yao (2010), An (2011a), Chen (2011b) have contributed considerably to teacher autonomy research and exploring innate relations between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy.

However, researches in the present time focus more on the macro level of teacher autonomy while lack of micro descriptions. Researchers defined teacher autonomy as a

kind of “capacity”, but they failed to identify what the capacity specifically consists of. There are various definitions describing capacity like reflection and creativity, and so on. But systematic description is yet to be built. Also dimensions of teacher autonomy like freedom and right still belong to macro category, which is difficult for researchers to explore on a micro level.

## 2. Theoretical basis

### 2. 1 Definition and meaning of teacher autonomy

What is teacher autonomy? There are various definitions due to different point of view. Little (1995) sees teacher autonomy as below: “Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploring the freedom that this confers.” Aoki (2000) combines the innate drive and individual awareness with capacity, arguing that the key to teacher autonomy is the capacity, freedom, and responsibility to make choices concerning one’s own teaching. And other researchers continue to explore the multifaceted nature of teacher autonomy. McGrath (2000) defines teacher autonomy more comprehensively. He identifies teacher autonomy based on two different while related dimensions—“teacher autonomy as self-directed professional action or development and teacher au-

tonomy as freedom from control by others”. Benson (2001) also echoes this view.

Most domestic researches also support this catch-all framework, defining teacher autonomy by knowledge and capacity. For instance, Gao & Li (2011) define autonomy as rights, awareness and capacity from the perspective of course and teaching, providing a rather practical definition which is closely related to teaching. Chen (2011) sees teaching autonomy of English teachers as the process and means to take control of teaching under limited teaching condition, attract students’ interest and create interactive atmosphere as well as the capacity and rights to adjust and control the constraints of external factors. Liu & Gao (2006) argue that teacher autonomy in classroom is embodied by the way teachers handle the relation between learners and materials, learners and tasks so as to create opportunity of interactive cooperation to enable both parties to develop knowledge and autonomy.

## 2.2 Working definition of teacher autonomy

Descriptions of teacher autonomy are various. In general, teacher autonomy is the capacity of taking control, criticism and reflection throughout the teaching context and process, which cannot only facilitate learner autonomy but also develop teachers' career and life-long learning. All capacity above is related to and supplement each other. When it comes to specific teaching process, autonomous teachers are able to freely present teaching materials and content at his own will, take control of his own course by freely refine and transcend the content, create interactive atmosphere and cultivate autonomous learners.

The reason why we inspect teacher autonomy in the framework of classroom teaching is based on the following reasons. First, classroom teaching is the most important part in foreign language teaching for being the concrete movement to realize teaching objectives (Shu, 2011). Besides, classroom is the main place where teachers interact with students, guarantee enriched language input, provide learners with proper

learning strategy and assess students' learning behavior. Second, autonomous teachers' nature and capacity are mostly related to classroom behavior and are fully embodied by classroom teaching.

Therefore, mediation theory provides us with the framework to inspect teacher behavior on a micro level. Mediation theory is based on social constructionism theory, the main content of which is classroom teaching is a dynamic and coordinating process of learners, teachers, tasks and materials. The teacher presents autonomy through being the mediator. Willam & Burden (2000) explain the responsibility of the teacher as a mediator: to empower students with the capacity of independent learning, to help students access and process learning material, to interact with students, and to make students understand and reciprocate to the teacher's intention.

Referring to the mediation theory introduced by Williams and Burden, the multiple interactive relationship in the classroom is analyzed, which is, the relationship between learners and materials, learners and tasks as well as learners and interaction.

## 3. Methodology

This article aims to report an empirical study of teacher autonomy in EFL classroom teaching. First, the materials are recorded in a Chinese primary school about an experienced English teacher who can give full play to teacher autonomy. The students are in

Grade 4. The unit topic is "At Century Park" and is arranged in three sessions, lasting for 118 minutes in total (about 40 minutes per session). Second, we transcript both the teacher's and students' talk and movement with ELAN, a professional software for au-

dio and video transcription, which allows us to add different tiers to the materials and the duration of every label is accurate to millisecond so that micro and quantified analysis of classroom teaching can be implemented. Then we output the whole transcription in one form to analyze the time allocation and

the teacher's/students' talk and behavior. This methodology gives us a comprehensive grasp throughout the sessions. Meanwhile, the most important thing is that we can clearly see what's actually going on in the EFL classroom and define teacher autonomy on a micro level.

## 4. Analysis and discussion

### 4.1 Learner & teaching material

Besides language knowledge, autonomous teachers also focus on students' all-round development, including cognition, emotion, capacity and quality. There are direct interaction between students and materials in the EFL classroom, while the teacher should be the main mediator of this procedure. Materials, if used properly, cannot only provide students with clear learning framework but also promote their autonomy and interests towards learning. However, lots of students see teaching materials only as the resource of vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, it is the autonomous teacher's responsibility to facilitate further interaction be-

tween students and teaching materials and cultivate students' autonomous capacity to seek values beyond vocabulary and grammar. Teacher autonomy manifests itself in the way the teacher sets teaching objectives and presents the content. For instance, in arranging the unit "At Century Park", the teaching strategy can be presented as follows:

First, decide keywords and topics; observe, learn and use the keywords based on the text. Taking the first session for example, the topic is "Planning a picnic in Century Park". Three branch topics and six keywords are involved, as showed in the form below:

	Topics & keywords	Time(second)	Duration	ratio
1	Talking about picnic	20. 96—268. 22	247. 26	10. 38%
2	Repeating the words "Century Park"	268. 28—316. 4	48. 12	2. 14%
3	Talking about food needed for a picnic	341. 16—647. 68	306. 52	12. 7%
4	Talking about the weather and things needed	650. 54—1063. 94	413. 4	17. 17%
5	Talking about the word "sketchbook"	1207. 2—1449. 28	242. 07	9. 71%
6	Talking about the word "pond"	1449. 257—1590. 569	141. 312	6. 07%
7	Talking about the words "plant house"	1590. 606—1831. 867	241. 261	9. 78%
8	Talking about the word "fountain"	1832. 271—2136. 979	304. 708	13. 35%
9	Talking about the word "camera"	2137. 202—2192. 387	55. 185	2. 78%

The duration of the first session is 40'55, and the discussion over the topics and keywords above takes up a large part (up to 84.08%). The session goes as what, where, when & how, showing a clear map of the picnic to Century Park. And the discussion over every keyword is no less than one minutes. Some of the difficult ones are highlighted and more time is spent to practice and put the keywords into use. For example, in explaining the word "fountain", 326.8 seconds are spent to explain its meaning and extend the word to more specific content. Also, other media like audio, video and pictures are used in explaining the word to meet different learning styles, which is a good starting point to create language context.

Second, encourage the students to search for information beyond the textbook.

The textbook is the primary learning material, specifying the students' learning content and planning. However, the autonomous teacher also encourages the students to extend their learning beyond the textbook, which is an efficient way to cultivate learning autonomy. More rights of decision and control to the text are empowered to the students so that they should take more responsibilities to their learning. Autonomous teachers believe that language is the carrier of culture. Foreign language teaching is not only about skill training but also the capacity to manage new information. Therefore, teachers should get involved in the process when students access their learning materials outside the class. The chart below is the transcription in the second session;

TT	Do you know which bus can take us there? Nine... Number?
SILENCE	(Wait)
SST	746.
TT	74?
SST	6.
TT	6,OK, No. 746.
AST	No. 746.
TT	Yes, bus No. 746.
AST	Bus No. 746.
TT	A bus No. 746.
AST	A bus No. 746.
TT	And subway by?
AST	Two.
TT	And of course we can take a...?
AST	Taxi.
TT	Yes, yes?
SST	And bus No. 103.
TT	1...1003?
SST	103 there.
TT	103 there. Yes, a bus No. 103 there.
AST	Bus No. 103 there.
IST	And a bus a bus * * No. 1.
TT	Oh, yes and * * No. 1 Yes?
IST	And bus No. 975.
TT	975. Good.

TT stands for teacher talk. SST stands for some students talk. AST stands for all students talk. IST stands for individual student talk. SILENCE stands for no one is talking.

Century Park as the topic, the teacher tries to lead the students to look for information on the Internet or real life, which is beyond the

textbook. The question is how to get to Century Park. To answer it, the students search for useful information on the Internet based on personal experience. Therefore different even unexpected answers pop out, which create an authentic communicative context for the students. In this way learner autonomy can be cultivated.

#### 4.2 Learners & tasks

The task is the interface of teacher-student interaction. On one hand, tasks are to practice new knowledge and improve language competence; on the other hand, tasks are to eliminate dependence and cultivate learner autonomy. Teacher autonomy is showed in the process the teacher assign, implement and evaluate the task. It is important for the teacher to apply appropriate task materials, structures and steps when designing teaching tasks so that the students

can gain as more as possible out of the teaching activity. In explaining the task, the teacher should avoid tedious instruction so as to let the students think about the task and get to know the teacher's intention and react as required, which is also a manifestation of teacher autonomy. The order of the tasks should range from easy to difficult, controlled exercises to meaningful communication so that the students are guaranteed with enough opportunities to make improvement. Meanwhile, we should notice that low autonomy activity should be prior to high autonomy activity.

The following chart shows the transcription of the classroom task in the third session. The task is about pairs of the students ask and answer with each other about a place they like in Century Park.

	Discourse	Start time	End time	Duration
TT	Yes, and talk with your partner. Ask and answer what place you like.	303.05	307.85	4.8
AST	⟨The students ask and answer with their partners.⟩	307.7	343.3	35.6
TT	This time everybody, let's listen to SN1 and SN2.	341.85	347.45	5.6
PST	What place do you like? I like our clock. Where is it? What can you see there? I can see a big plant house there.	347.8	365.3	17.5
TT	En, good. Where is it? Good, SN3 and SN4.	365.5	372.9	7.4
PST	What place do you like? I like the plant house. Where is it? It's... it's near the gate. What can you see there? I can see... I can see a swing in the fun park.	373.05	390.75	17.7
TT	Yes, good. Swing and maybe a pirate ship. The pirate ship, OK?	390.35	396.05	5.7

There are five tasks in this session. The chart above is the typical structure of one of the tasks. First, the teacher briefly explains the task and waits for half a minute for the students' preparation. Then the teacher asks two or three pairs of the students to act it out. The teacher corrects each pair's mistake if any and give feedback right after their presentation. The design of task is fast paced and is able to attract students' attention, showing high level of teacher autonomy. However, student presentation observe a quite fixed pattern, which is a low autonomy activity. We can infer that it is because primary students are yet not competent enough to produce more completed discourse. But we can expect more autonomy out of students in future study when they move on to the next step.

### 4.3 Learner & interaction

Different from traditional teaching, autonomous teaching is more likely to be a two-way procedure instead of a monotonous one-way flow, applying teaching dialogue to promote interaction between teachers and students. Little(1995) argues that interaction between teachers and students, i. e. pedagogical dialogue is an effective way to promote learner autonomy. With text as the basis of the dialogue, the teacher builds communicative context by asking questions and correct the students in time. Teaching dialogue turns the classroom into a learning community where teaching and learning can be converted to each other. The chart below is a record of questions in the classroom:

	Tallies	Percent	Remark
Questions	19	22.09%	To all students
Q&A	43	50.00%	To individual students
Prompt	20	23.26%	
Forward Questions	4	4.65%	More than one questions to individual students
Aggregate	86		Frequency: 2.2/min

We can see from the chart that question frequency is up to 2.2 times per minute, which is pretty high. That is a smart way to attract primary students' attention, who are liable to lost concentration, and keep them focused. Also, with more than 50 students in the classroom, the teacher asks questions in high frequency as a strategy to save time and check the students' learning as more as possible. On the one hand, it facilitates the interaction between the teacher and the students; on the other hand, frequent questions can mobilize classroom atmosphere. However, it doesn't mean that the more questions the better. When it comes to simple questions, questions can be frequent. While asking difficult questions, the teacher should slow down and leave more time for the students to think, all depending on the teacher's control. It is also one of the autonomous teacher's feature to take control of the pace and content of the classroom. Question frequency can also be testified in the data: In the first 7 minutes of the class while reviewing last session, question frequency is up to 4.1 times per minute; when it comes to new information, question frequency is reduced to 2.1 times per minute.

Besides, Q & A (questions to individual students) take up the largest part, up to

50%, while forward questions are the least, only 4.65%. The ratios of questions to all students and prompt are close, 22.09% and 23.26% respectively.

## 5. Conclusion

All in all, this article examines teacher autonomy on a micro level, following the framework of mediation theory. The classroom is seen as a dynamic system where the teacher acts as a mediator and performs autonomy in setting tasks, materials and interaction. Foreign language teacher autonomy in the classroom can be expressed as below. With multiple teaching objectives, the teacher chooses and processes appropriate learning materials and create authentic context with target language to facilitate knowledge internalization and autonomy in the students. This article also aims to enlighten EFL teachers to act more autonomy in classrooms and cultivate learner autonomy, which is rather significant to teachers' career development.

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# Cooperative Learning in a Blended Environment: From Interdependence to Autonomy or Vice Versa?

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**Abstract:** Learner autonomy is an important pedagogical goal in education. In the literature researchers mainly address its individual dimensions, with its social dimensions seriously under-researched. This study aims to explore the reciprocal relationships between positive interdependence (and its two types: goal interdependence and resource interdependence) and learner autonomy (categorized into four dimensions: goal autonomy, plan autonomy, strategy autonomy and evaluation autonomy). The participants were 170 sophomores enrolled in a non-major English listening and speaking course from a university in central China which adopted blended cooperative teaching. Data were collected by a self-report questionnaire. Correlation and regression analyses indicated significant reciprocal relationships between learner autonomy and positive interdependence. Specifically, resource interdependence better fostered learner autonomy than did goal interdependence, with evaluation autonomy benefiting the most and strategy autonomy the least. This study also confirmed the positive effect of learner autonomy on cooperative learning as mediated by positive interdependence, and therefore characterized blended cooperative learning as “goal-driven, resource-enabled, assessment-guaranteed, and strategy-initiated”.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, Cooperative learning, Learner autonomy, Positive interdependence

## 1 Introduction

Ever since its introduction by Holec in 1981<sup>[1]</sup>, the concept of “learner autonomy” has become a recurrent theme in the literature and has become mainstreamed as a key concept in foreign

language educational planning. Although much has been written on this subject, and seemingly “there is nothing new or mysterious about learner autonomy”<sup>[2]</sup>, the innovative learning structure brought about by blended practice of teaching and learning is bringing the issue of learner autonomy more sharply into focus, which should “necessitate broadening our understanding of learner autonomy and its role in the complex learning and technology nexus”<sup>[3]</sup>. This is particularly the case in China since “learner autonomy” was recognized as an important pedagogical goal for college English teaching in 2007 and the self-access centers(SAC) have been set up in universities across China to implement the computer- and classroom-based teaching mode to facilitate

learners’ individualized and autonomous learning, a prelude to the integration of information technology into foreign language teaching, which is now commonly known as the blended practice of English learning.

In this regard, this study, set against the context of blended learning, aims to shift the focus away from the “individual” aspects, as is the case in autonomy literature, and looks at the social dimensions of autonomy, with the particular focus on learners’ interdependence in cooperative learning. Although most of these have also been with us for some time, the focus on cooperative learning in a blended environment with regard to autonomy is still relatively new.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Learner autonomy

Despite the variations in definition in the literature, learner autonomy is widely accepted as a kind of capacity, for a learner “to assume responsibility for”<sup>[4]</sup> or “take control of”<sup>[5]</sup> his learning, especially for “self-directed learning”<sup>[6]</sup>, and this kind of capacity depends on a learner’s ability and willingness<sup>[7]</sup> to make and carry out the choices governing his learning in goal setting, planning, learning strategies use and monitor, and self-assessment.

Learner autonomy varies in degree; a learner could be functioning at any point on the autonomy continuum from dependent (teacher-directed) to independent (learner-directed), or from reactive autonomy to proactive autonomy<sup>[8]</sup>. There is no total independence or autonomy, as Little argues, “total independence is not autonomy but autism”<sup>[9]</sup>. The development of

autonomy in a learner is a gradual shift from teacher dependence toward teacher/learner interdependence and then further toward learner independence; it is “an optimal state of equilibrium between maximal self-development and human interdependence”<sup>[10]</sup>. These remarks highlight the social dimensions of learner autonomy with its focus on learner interdependence.

An examination into the literature on learner autonomy in China may suggest three well-established research areas: (1) re-conceptualizing, re-framing and measuring of learner autonomy in the context of foreign language learning in China; (2) teachers’ role in promoting learner autonomy as strategy trainer, facilitator, counselor and resource; (3) individual factors on learner autonomy, including learning motivation, self-efficacy, learning strategies etc., studies in this re-

gard link learner autonomy closely to cognitive strategies, and meta-cognitive strategies in particular.

As can be easily seen, autonomy researchers in China mostly focus on the individual aspects of learner autonomy, with its social dimensions seriously under-researched. Xiao, Xu & Zhang and Xiao & Xu had tried to fill the gap, the former exploring the relationship between college students' autonomy and their perception of social support, sense of class belonging<sup>[11]</sup>, the latter students' autonomy and their positive interdependence<sup>[12]</sup>. Statistical analysis produced overall positive correlations, confirming the social attributes of learner autonomy. The results, to some degree, have inspired thinking about and practice of incorporating cooperative learning with autonomous learning<sup>[13]</sup>. By conducting an experimental study, Xu proved that cooperative out-of-class learning could facilitate learner autonomy<sup>[14]</sup>. Although relating learner autonomy to cooperative learning may have formed an emerging yet significant research area, little is still known about how this works, which entails an examination of how cooperative learning could be designed to foster learner autonomy.

## 2.2 Cooperative learning and interdependence

Cooperative learning has been shown to be relatively more effective in promoting learner achievement and interaction than competitive and individual learning<sup>[15]</sup>. Yet there is still a concern among practitioners that some students often remain reluctant to actively participate in group

work, and sometimes only one or two willing students do almost all the work to complete the group assignment<sup>[16]</sup>, resulting in social loafing and free riding. For cooperative learning to be effective, teachers must create conditions for: 1) positive interdependence, 2) individual accountability, and 3) group processing<sup>[17][18]</sup>.

Positive interdependence is achieved when learners perceive that the success of each individual is an important element of group success in completing the assigned activity, and for an individual to succeed, he/she should help all other members to succeed<sup>[19]</sup>. Only with positive interdependence will all members try to fulfill their individual accountability for the group's success, and they therefore would constantly assess the completion of individual accountability and reflect on who performed well and which actions should be continued or discontinued, which means, positive interdependence is the most important component in cooperative learning<sup>[20][21]</sup>.

There are different types of positive interdependence in cooperative learning, such as goal interdependence, resource interdependence, task interdependence, role interdependence, reward interdependence. Goal interdependence exists when participants perceive that they can succeed in reaching their goal if and only if the other individuals with whom they are cooperatively linked also reach their goals. It is structured through assigning one common goal for all students to achieve. Resource interdependence exists when each member has only a portion of the information, resources or materials necessary for the task to be completed and members' resources have to be combined in order for the group to achieve its

goal [22]. Positive resource interdependence is structured through giving group members different resources (information and/or equipment) or assigning them different parts of the task so that they must share in order to successfully complete the individual and group task.

While considerable research has been conducted on many of the ways to structure positive interdependence and there is evidence that positive interdependence (cooperation) is more effective in facilitating learners' perception of social support, interaction, attitude and achievement than is negative interdependence (competition) or no interdependence (individual efforts) both in face-to-face and traditional learning environments<sup>[23][24][25][26]</sup>, few studies have investigated positive interdependence in blended learning environments. On the other hand, although Xiao & Xu confirmed the positive correlations between positive interdependence and learner autonomy

[27], they didn't design cooperative activities and only conducted correlation analysis, thus little is still known about their causal effect direction, that is, whether it is positive interdependence that facilitates learner autonomy, or learner autonomy that contributes to positive interdependence.

In accordance with the existing research and the components that seem to be missing, the present study was conducted to address the following research questions:

- (1) What is the reciprocal relationship between positive interdependence and learner autonomy in blended cooperative learning environment?
- (2) How do positive interdependence and learner autonomy contribute to student satisfaction with their blended cooperative learning experience?

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 The participants and the course

Participants of this study were 170 non-English-major sophomores in a university in China who enrolled in five classes of the course College English Listening and Speaking taught by the same teacher. This university implements the curricula-variable system, allowing the students to select the course and teacher they like, instead of assigning the students from the same major into the same class, as is often the case in China. This made the course blended in student composition.

For this 12-week course, before meeting each other in class, the participants were supposed to finish some learning units from

the online learning system, as well as some test items or tasks related to the mini-lectures or audio/video materials designed and uploaded to the course management system by the teacher. The out-of-class individual learning could be done either in the self-access center or in their dormitory. The 2 class hours' in-class meeting each week is mainly set for the student-centered cooperative activities, as well as the teacher-led lectures or Q&A. This made the course content a blend of teacher lecturing, individual autonomous learning, and group cooperative learning.

To implement cooperative teaching, the participants in each class worked in fixed

small groups of 4-5. To facilitate their online communication and cooperation, social media like QQ, WeChat and online forum were adopted. To complete the group assignments, the members had discussions, made choices and plans, divided the labor, shared resources and incorporated contributions mainly online, which was facilitated by their computers, smart phones, tablets and the wide access to campus wireless network. In class, they presented their group work, had discussion, and had peer evaluations. This made the environment for our cooperative learning blended in nature and in platform.

### 3.2 Instruments

The data were collected through administering a five-point self-report Likert scale, which was developed for the participants to respond to the items as “strongly agree”, “agree”, “undecided”, “disagree”, and “strongly disagree”. The scale was comprised of three sub-parts. Part 1 was reproduced from the questionnaire designed by Xu to investigate

learner autonomy in English learning [28], with 23 items falling into the four dimensions of autonomy in identifying and setting goals(goal autonomy for short), autonomy in making plans(plan autonomy), autonomy in choosing, applying and monitoring strategies(strategy autonomy), autonomy in reflecting on the learning process and evaluating the learning results(evaluation autonomy). Part 2 was reproduced from the Classroom Life Measure from Ghaith, et al. [29], with 5 items measuring the positive goal interdependence and 6 items the positive resource interdependence. Part 3 was reproduced from the questionnaire in Sorden & Munene [30], with 12 items measuring student satisfaction with the course. The scale showed good reliability, with the average Cronbach's  $\alpha$  for the 3 sub-parts and the scale as a whole being. 852, .887, .836 and. 917 respectively. 165 valid copies were collected after the questionnaire was administered to the 170 participants in week 12.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Correlation between positive interdependence and learner autonomy

Tab. 1 Correlation analysis between positive interdependence and learner autonomy

variable	GA	PA	SA	EA	LA
GI	.523 **	.555 **	.461 **	.555 **	.620 **
RI	.496 **	.534 **	.528 **	.617 **	.655 **

GA = goal autonomy, PA = plan autonomy, SA = strategy autonomy, EA = evaluation autonomy, LA = learner autonomy; GI = goal interdependence, RI = resource interdependence, PI = positive interdependence. \* significant at. 05, \*\* significant at. 01, \*\*\* significant at. 001

Tab. 1 shows the results of analyzing the correlation between the two types of positive interdependence and learner autonomy. Using Pearson's  $r$ , there was significant moderate positive correlation at the 0. 01 level. Comparatively, the correlation between resource interdependence and general learner autonomy( $r = .655$ ) was higher than goal interdependence( $r = .620$ ). Specifically, the correlations between resource interde-

pendence and strategy autonomy ( $r = .528$ ), evaluation autonomy ( $r = .617$ ) were higher than goal interdependence, but the relationships between goal interdependence and goal autonomy ( $r = .523$ ), plan autonomy ( $r = .555$ ) were higher than resource interdependence.

#### 4.2 Effect of positive interdependence on learner autonomy

The positive correlations found here indicate that we can further conduct regression analysis to find out more about the reciprocal relationships between positive inter-

dependence and learner autonomy and how they contribute to the students' satisfaction.

With goal interdependence and resource interdependence as predictors and learner autonomy as dependent variable, entering multiple linear regression analysis shows (Tab. 2):  $F(2, 163) = 75.811 (p = .000)$ ,  $R^2 = .482$ , indicating that 48.2% of variance in learner autonomy was significantly explained by goal interdependence and resource interdependence together. The effect of resource interdependence on learner autonomy was  $\beta = .435$ , stronger than goal interdependence  $\beta = .318$ .

**Tab. 2 Multiple regression analysis on the effects of positive interdependence on learner autonomy**

variable	B	$\beta$	T	
GI/LA	.287	.318	4.057 ***	$R = .694, a = .977, F(2, 163) = 75.811^{***}, R^2 = .482, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .476$
RI/LA	.351	.435	5.549 ***	

With positive interdependence as predictor and the four dimensions of learner autonomy as dependent variables, unitary linear regression analysis (Tab. 3) shows that all standardized coefficients were significant; the  $R^2$  for goal autonomy, plan autonomy,

strategy autonomy and evaluation autonomy were .307, .350, .287, .407 respectively, indicating that positive interdependence was most effective in promoting learners' evaluation autonomy, and least effective in strategy autonomy.

**Tab. 3 Unitary regression analysis on the effects of positive interdependence on learner autonomy**

variable	B	$\beta$	T	
PI/GA	1.567	.554	7.510 ***	$F = 72.665^{***}, R^2 = .307, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .303$
	.511		8.524 ***	
PI/PA	1.122	.591	4.701 ***	$F = 88.204^{***}, R^2 = .350, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .346$
	.644		9.392 ***	
PI/SA	.716	.536	2.602 **	$F = 65.988^{***}, R^2 = .287, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .283$
	.642		8.123 ***	
PI/EA	.663	.636	2.650 **	$F = 111.114^{***}, R^2 = .404, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .400$
	.757		10.541 ***	

### 4.3 Effect of learner autonomy on positive interdependence

With the four dimensions of learner autonomy as predictors and positive interdependence as dependent variable, the results of stepwise multiple linear regression analysis are shown in Tab. 4. The three variables added into the model were goal autonomy, strategy autonomy and evaluation autonomy. Collinearity diagnostics produced tolerance values between .595 and .709, with the

largest VIF being 1.681, indicating that the problem of multicollinearity didn't exist. For the three variables adding into the model,  $R = .706$ ,  $R^2 = .499$ ,  $F = 53.686 (p = .000)$ , indicating that goal autonomy, strategy autonomy and evaluation autonomy together could explain 49.9% of the variance in positive interdependence. More specifically, the effect of evaluation autonomy on positive interdependence ( $\beta = .404$ ) is larger than goal autonomy ( $\beta = .282$ ) and strategy autonomy ( $\beta = .159$ ).

Tab. 4 Stepwise multiple regression analysis on the effects of learner autonomy on positive interdependence

variable	R	$R^2$	F	B	$\beta$	T
1. EA	.636	.404	111.114 ***	.339	.404	5.605 ***
2. GA	.695	.483	76.258 ***	.306	.282	4.266 ***
3. SA	.706	.499	53.686 ***	.133	.159	2.213 *

### 4.4 Effect of learner autonomy and positive interdependence on satisfaction

Entering multiple linear regression analysis with positive interdependence and learner autonomy as predictors and satisfaction as dependent variable (Tab. 5) shows F

$= 388.601 (p = .000)$ ,  $R^2 = .827$ , indicating that 82.7% of variance in student satisfaction was significantly explained by positive interdependence and learner autonomy together. The effect of learner autonomy on student satisfaction was  $\beta = .575$ , stronger than positive interdependence  $\beta = .411$ .

Tab. 5 Multiple regression analysis on the effect of positive interdependence and learner autonomy on satisfaction

variable	B	$\beta$	T	$R = .909, a = -0.463, F(2, 163) = 388.601 ***, R^2 = .827, \text{adjusted } R^2 = .825$
LA/ST	.694	.575	12.730 ***	
PI/ST	.462	.411	9.097 ***	

With the four dimensions of learner autonomy and two types of positive interdependence as predictors and satisfaction as dependent variable, the results of stepwise multiple linear regression analysis are shown in Tab. 6. Except for plan autonomy, the

other five variables were all added into the model. Collinearity diagnostics produced tolerance values between .423 and .722, with the largest VIF being 2.366, indicating that the problem of multicollinearity didn't exist.  $R = .910$ ,  $R^2 = .829$ ,  $F = 53.686 (p = .000)$ .

000), indicating that 82.9% of the variance in student satisfaction could be explained by resource interdependence, strategy autonomy, goal interdependence, evaluation autonomy and goal autonomy together, and their effects( $\beta$ ) were .218, .316, .126, .233, .240 respectively, indicating that the effect of strategy autonomy on student satisfaction was the biggest, followed by goal interdependence and evaluation autonomy.

**Tab. 6 Multiple linear regression analysis on the effects of positive interdependence types and learner autonomy dimensions on satisfaction**

variable	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	B	$\beta$	T
1. RI	.758	.574	221.240***	.212	.218	4.336***
2. SA	.858	.736	226.760***	.296	.316	7.323***
3. GI	.887	.787	199.655***	.262	.240	4.983***
4. EA	.905	.819	181.566***	.220	.233	5.008***
5. GA	.910	.829	154.705***	.154	.126	3.065***

## 5. Discussion

Although this study aims to look into the effect of learner autonomy on cooperative learning as mediated by positive interdependence in the context of blended learning, instead of following the traditional research line of exploring how cooperative learning contributes to learner autonomy, our findings did support that cooperative learning could foster learner autonomy.

First, as shown in Tab. 1, the correlations between positive interdependence and learner autonomy were much higher than the medium correlations in Xiao & Xu's research [31]. One possible explanation is that they only reported the results of a questionnaire survey but didn't conduct cooperative teaching, while this study did. This confirmed the beneficial effect of cooperative learning on learner autonomy, especially in blended learning environment. This is because, in blended environment, online coop-

erative environment creates a friendly and low-anxiety learning environment which offers learner the convenience for interaction and resource sharing, and also allows them enough time for in-depth critical thinking in discussion, then face-to-face cooperation provides them the necessary social cues and social presence for affective support to increase their motivation and to encourage "all" rather than "some" students to participate.

However, as is proved by this study, the beneficial effect of cooperative learning on autonomy is mediated by positive interdependence, as is shown in Tab. 2, positive interdependence could significantly account for 48.2% of the variance in learner autonomy. In autonomy-support cooperative learning, the teacher's task is to provide a learning environment that supports students' basic needs to become motivated and engage

in self-regulated learning, and to transfer the control and responsibility to learners to bring them to the point where they accept “equal responsibility for co-production”<sup>[32]</sup> of classroom language lessons. By stipulating accountability and sharing responsibility, positive interdependence ensures that students will take control over and assume responsibility for their own learning, leading them on their way from interdependence to autonomy.

Both the correlation and regression analyses in this study show that the effect of positive resource interdependence on learner autonomy is greater than that of goal interdependence, which disagrees with the results of Ghaith, et al.<sup>[33]</sup> and Xiao & Xu<sup>[34]</sup>, who argued that goal interdependence was more important in enhancing learning achievement and learner autonomy because resource interdependence was driven by goal interdependence. This could be explained by the fact that, while making resource searching and sharing more convenient than traditional learning environment, online environment also automatically keeps track of the interaction and resource sharing among group members, which, together with teachers' presence either implicit or explicit, produces the necessary constraints, supervision, incentives and role models to encourage all members to participate and contribute. In blended cooperative learning, resource interdependence is better perceived by students than is goal interdependence, giving them a stronger sense of social support and group belonging, and encouraging them to engage more actively in web-based autonomous in-

quiry and interactive collaboration. Therefore, while goal interdependence is more important in creating the necessary “attitude” towards autonomous learning, resource interdependence is more effective in encouraging the actual behaviors of autonomy learning, resulting in the development and internalization of autonomous learning ability.

Xiao & Xu found that the correlations between positive interdependence and autonomy in using and monitoring learning strategies were not significant<sup>[35]</sup>, while this study, as is shown in Tab. 3, found that the effect of positive interdependence on learners' strategy autonomy was significant. This may have to do with the fact that the low-anxiety and low-risk online environment has encouraged more help-seeking behaviors, which is a very important adaptive strategy for autonomous learning<sup>[36]</sup>. Also the asynchronous communication in online communication provides learners with more time for thought processing and more sources for learning strategies because the resources students share may contain some strategies, which makes students in a better position to help each other in terms of learning strategies. However, among the four dimensions, strategy autonomy benefited the least from interdependence ( $R^2 = .287$ ), indicating that students still mostly expected the teacher to offer them useful learning strategies. In talking about cultural appropriateness and traits of learner autonomy in language learning, Ho & Crockall pointed out that Chinese concern with face and Chinese students' respect for authority might be an obstacle to the promotion of autonomy

<sup>[37]</sup>. Most Chinese students' respect for authority and their view of the teacher as the authority figure result in the "autonomous dependency", the dependence on trusted and knowable others in learning, especially as far as learning strategy is concerned. In blended learning environment, teachers might not be the only source of knowledge anymore, but their role as learner strategy trainer is only becoming all the more important as students engage more in autonomous learning.

As is mentioned above, what makes this study different might be the concern over how learner autonomy can facilitate cooperative learning. Regression analysis (Tab. 5) did show that learner autonomy could significantly predict ( $\beta = .575$ ) student satisfaction with our blended cooperative learning experience. This is achieved by positive interdependence encouraged and maintained by learner autonomy. Autonomous learners are those who have the ability and the willingness to take control over and assume responsibility for his own learning, and only autonomous learners can become the trusted and dependable ones in cooperation.

## 6. Conclusion

The findings of this study bring us a step closer to understanding the social dimensions of learner autonomy as well the components of effective cooperative learning. The results show that blended cooperative learning is a good way for us to help learners move from dependence to independence as is mediated by interdependence,

Among the four dimensions, evaluation autonomy (Tab. 4) is the most effective in maintaining the positive interdependence among peers ( $\beta = .404$ ). This might have to do with how our cooperative learning was evaluated. We adopted formative assessment for our cooperative learning and tried to involve learners in criteria designing, peer assessment and self-assessment. In this way, they got to know better the goals and requirements for cooperative learning. By taking into account both the group products and individual contributions, assessment could help maintain the relationship of "individual accountability, within-group interdependence and between-group competition".

As shown in Tab. 6, although strategy autonomy benefited the least from cooperative learning, among the six variables discussed in this study, it was the strongest predictor ( $\beta = .316$ ) for student satisfaction, indicating the importance of learning strategies in autonomous and cooperative learning, this again points to the importance of learner strategy training.

which means, apart from the aforementioned three components of effective cooperative learning, learner autonomy should be included as another essential component. In blended cooperative learning environment, learner autonomy and learner interdependence can mutually facilitate and they together contribute to students' positive experience

with cooperative learning. Echoing the title, here we can conclude that cooperative learning in a blended environment is a process of leading students from interdependence toward autonomy, and also a process of bringing students from autonomy to interdepend-

ence. As such, we can characterize blended cooperative learning as “goal-driven, resource-enabled, assessment-guaranteed, and strategy-initiated” and work out a model with standardized path coefficients(Fig. 1) to make a summary of our findings.

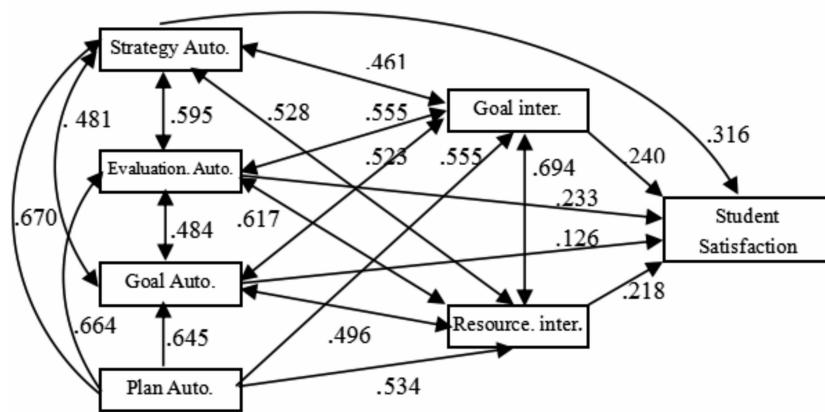


Fig. 1 Model with standardized path coefficients

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# Effects of English Learning Motivational Beliefs on Non-English Majors' Use of Motivational Regulation Strategies \*

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the effects of motivational beliefs on non-English majors' use of motivational regulation strategies by establishing a structural equation model. The survey of 301 sophomores indicated that (1) three motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, mastery goal orientation and task<sup>①</sup> value correlated positively and significantly with each other; (2) all of them had direct and positive effects on the use of motivational regulation strategies and could predict 53% variance of the use of motivational regulation strategies; (3) self-efficacy had the largest direct and positive effects, mastery goal orientation's effects were the second, and task values' were the third.

**Keywords:** Effects, English learning, Motivational beliefs, Motivational regulation strategies

## 1. Introduction

In foreign language learning, students' motivation is very important. Without enough motivation, even students with high level cognition may find it impossible to achieve long term goals (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). In fact, it is hard for learners to always keep a high level of motivation. When the motivation declines, learners have to adopt some motivational regulation strategies, like stress re-

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duction or self-reward. Motivational regulation is an important aspect of self-regulated learning and has an impact on academic learning and achievement (Wolters, 2003). English learning motivational regulation strategies are those strategies learners use to improve their motivational level and efforts to continue their English study (Liu, 2014).

Till now, most researches have focused on the classification and the specific use of those strategies; few researches have been on learners' factors affecting the use of motivational regulation strategies. Such researches on learners' factors' effects may better help teachers to suit the instruction to

students' level and help students to sustain their motivation with motivational regulation strategies. The present relevant researches have only focused on learners' uncontrollable factors' effects, like gender, and so on. As to controllable factors, for example, the motivational belief of self-efficacy, few researchers have done such investigation. Wolters & Benzon (2013) point out that students' motivational beliefs have important impacts on their motivational regulation. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the effects of motivational beliefs, learners' controllable factors, on non-English majors' use of motivational regulation strategies.

## 2. Research background

### 2.1 Motivational regulation strategies

Since the 1990s, many researches have been focusing on how teachers and students motivate and sustain students' motivational level with strategies. There are two aspects of the use of motivational regulation strategies: on the one hand, the strategies' users are teachers, namely teachers' motivational teaching strategies; on the other hand, the strategies' users are students, namely students' motivational learning strategies. The present researches are mostly on teachers' motivational teaching strategies (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Bernaus & Gardner, 2008; Moskovok, et al, 2013; Xu, 2014). Since there are few theoretical and empirical researches on students' motiva-

tional learning strategies and learners themselves are the key to the success of study, this research aims to make an empirical research on students' use of motivational learning strategies.

The present researches, either on teachers' motivational teaching strategies or on students' motivational learning strategies, are more on teachers' and students' use of strategies; only a few researches try to explore the complex relations between strategies use and learners' factors (Gao, 2012). Such researches investigated the different uses of strategies only according to learners' majors, gender and grades (Li, 2009; Gao&Liu,2014; Li, 2015). According to the classification made by Wen(1993), such factors belong to learners' uncontrollable factors. However, those psychological individu-

al differences, which are “enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree” (Dörnyei, 2005: 4), for instance, self-efficacy, very few researches have made such investigation. Xu & Li (2014) point out that those researches on uncontrollable learners’ factors are not practical enough; only the investigations on controllable learners’ factors are really concerned with individual learners’ learning.

## 2.2 Motivational beliefs

Many researches show that motivational beliefs, learners’ controllable factors, play an important role on self-regulation learning. Motivational beliefs refer to the factors that promote individuals to conduct some tasks, mainly including self-efficacy, goal-orientation and task value (Macrou & Philipou, 2005). Self-efficacy refers to individual’s self-expectation on his own ability of performance under some particular circumstances (Wang, 2009: 61). As to goal-orientation, researchers often divide it into mastery goal-orientation and performance goal-orientation, which is supported by many researches (Ames & Archer, 1988; Ames, 1992). The research of Zhang & Yuan (2004) shows that compared with performance goal-orientation, mastery goal-orientation has more positive effects on learners’ foreign language learning. What’s more, Wolters & Benzon’s research (2013) also shows that performance goal-orientation has no relation with motivational regulation strategies. Therefore, this research only focuses on mastery goal-orientation’s effects

on the use of motivational regulation strategies. According to expectancy-value theory, task value refers to individual’s subjective judgment on his behavior’s significance and importance (Wang, 2009: 2).

According to Pintrich (2003), students with higher level of task value, self-efficacy and mastery goal-orientation are more enthusiastic to make good use of various cognitive strategies and to regulate and monitor their own cognition more effectively. Since motivational beliefs have effects on the use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies, do they also have effects on the use of motivational regulation strategies, which are so important in learners’ autonomous learning?

The relevant researches in foreign countries are very limited. Their conclusions are not the same, which is probably due to different participants and survey instruments. For example, the research of Wolters & Rosenthal (2000) on American high school students shows that except self-efficacy, the motivational beliefs of task value, performance and mastery goal-orientation can positively predict motivational regulation strategies. However, Wolters & Benzon’s research (2013) on American liberal arts college students shows that all the motivational beliefs of self-efficacy, task value and goal-orientation can predict different dimensions of motivational regulation strategies. All the above researches do not focus on learners’ foreign language learning. What’s more, they haven’t pointed out the mutual relations among the several motivational beliefs. Especially on the effect of self-efficacy, they draw different conclusions. For instance, Wolters & Rosenthal (2000) found that self-efficacy did not have any predictable effect

on motivational regulation strategies, while Wolters & Benzon(2013) found that self-efficacy had predictable effect. Thus this topic needs further empirical researches to confirm. This research intends to explore motivational beliefs' effects on Chinese college students' use of motivational regulation strategies, by the means of those motivational beliefs' survey instruments that adapted to them.

Till now, in China, only limited researches have been carried out on the relations between motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies. Only Li's research (2008) shows that self-efficacy can predict four motivational regulation strategies. Whereas mastery goal-orientation had more predictable effects, it could predict all the eight motivational regulation strategies. However, Li(2008) has not pointed out the mutual relations among different motivational beliefs, either. As to task value, no researches have showed whether it also has effects on the use of motivational regulation strategies and how the effects are. What's more, most of the present relevant researches only explore a single motivational belief's effect on motivational regulation strategies, which will easily lead to some theoretical problems. That is to say, researchers fail to analyze the problem from a comprehensive and systematic perspective; instead, they only make fragmental and isolated explanations. Therefore, this research aims to explore the mutual relations among the three motivational beliefs of self-efficacy,

mastery goal-orientation and task value, their effects on motivational regulation strategies, and compare the different effects of the three motivational beliefs.

As to statistical methods, the present researches home and abroad only use simple correlation analysis and regression analysis. Xu(2009) points out that structural equation modeling combines many traditional multivariate statistical methods, like canonical correlation analysis, regression analysis, and so on, and also avoid the disadvantages of these methods. Li (2012; 193) also recommends that structural equation modeling should be applied in the researches on learners' factors. Therefore, this research intends to apply structural equation modeling to explore the effects of motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies.

## 2.3 Research questions

The research questions of this research are as follows:

(1) What are the mutual relations among the three motivational beliefs of self-efficacy, mastery goal-orientation and task value?

(2) How do the three motivational beliefs affect motivational regulation strategies?

(3) What are the specific effects of each motivational belief on motivational regulation strategies? Which motivational belief's effect is the largest?

### 3. Research design

#### 3.1 Subjects

In order to compare the results of Li's research(2008), this research also takes non-English majors as subjects. Boomsma & Hoogland(2001) point out that in order to have stable structural equation model, it is better to have over 200 subjects. The structural equation model will be stable if the subjects are between 200 and 500.

Therefore, six classes of 320 non-English major sophomores were selected at random from one college. The reason for choosing sophomores is that many second-year college students have been adjusting to autonomous learning after one year's college study and have more or less self-regulation abilities. This research's number of subjects meets the requirements of the structural equation modeling. The valid questionnaires are totally 301, and the validity is as high as 94.06%.

#### 3.2 Instruments

##### 3.2.1 English learning motivational regulation strategies questionnaire

This research aims to compare the results of Li's research(2008), so his motivational regulation strategies questionnaire is adopted. There are all together 40 items of the eight types of motivational regulation strategies, which consists of three subscales, including internal motivational regulation, external motivational regulation and volitional control. The internal motivational regulation is made up of 7 items of interest enhancement, 6 items of mastery self-talk, 3 items of task value enhancement and 4 items of self-efficacy enhancement. The

external motivational regulation is made up of 7 items of performance self-talk, 5 items of self-reward and 4 items of negative-based incentive. The volitional control subscale only consists of 4 items of volitional control. The student participants were expected to respond on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1(This statement is never or almost never true of me) to 5(This statement is completely or almost completely true of me). The eight strategies' points come from the average points of the items under each strategy.

##### 3.2.2 English learning self-efficacy questionnaire

According to Zhu(2012), nowadays the most frequently used self-efficacy questionnaire home is designed by Liang(2000), Academic Self-efficacy Questionnaire, which is consulted and modified from the relevant self-efficacy subscale of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire(MSLQ) designed by Pintrich & DeGroot(1990). This Academic Self-efficacy Questionnaire is divided into two subscales: One is learning ability self-efficacy(11 items), and the other is learning behavior self-efficacy(11 items). The five-point Likert Scale is applied in this questionnaire.

##### 3.2.3 English learning mastery goal-orientation questionnaire

This questionnaire is adopted from the mastery goal-orientation subscale of Achievement Goal-orientation Questionnaire modified by Xu, et al. (2000). There are all together 6 items and the five-point Likert Scale is applied. This questionnaire has been frequently applied in many researches and has very good reliability

and validity(Zhu,2012).

### 3.2.4 English learning task value questionnaire

This questionnaire is adopted from the subscale of Intrinsic Value of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) designed by Pintrich & DeGroot (1990). There are all together 9 items and the five-point Likert Scale is applied.

## 3.3 Procedures of data collection and data analysis

The questionnaires of motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies were conducted and collected in class. First, SPSS 16. 0 was used to organize the data, eliminate the miss-

ing values, recode the negative questions and calculate the average point of each item. Then, reliability analysis was made. After this, AMOS 17. 0 was used to make validity analysis. In the end, the structural equation model of motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies was made.

### 3.3.1 Reliability analysis

Reliability analysis was made by SPSS 16. 0. Tab. 1 displays the different Alpha values, which showed that only the Alpha values of negative-based incentive and volitional control were a little below 0. 7, all the other Alpha values were above 0. 7. The total reliability value of the questionnaire was as high as 0. 928, which is very satisfactory.

**Tab. 1 English Learning Motivational Regulation Strategies Questionnaire's scales and their Alpha values**

Scales	Strategies	Alpha value
Internal motivational regulation	Interest enhancement(7 items)	0. 830
	Mastery self-talk(6 items)	0. 793
	Task value enhancement(3 items)	0. 796
	Self-efficacy enhancement(4 items)	0. 750
External motivational regulation	Performance self-talk(7 items)	0. 793
	Self-reward(5 items)	0. 785
	Negative-based incentive(4 items)	0. 642
Volitional control	Volitional control(4 items)	0. 659
Total reliability of the questionnaire	40 items	0. 928

The reliability analysis results of Self-Efficacy Questionnaire showed that the Alpha value of learning ability self-efficacy was 0. 884. After deleting three items with relatively low item-to-total correlation values, the reliability value of learning behavior self-efficacy became 0. 757. The total reliability value of the questionnaire (19 items) was as high as 0. 901.

The reliability value of Mastery Goal-orientation Questionnaire ( 6 items ) was 0.

800. The reliability value of Value Task Questionnaire(9 items) was 0. 857.

### 3.3.2 Validity analysis

Validity analysis was made by AMOS 17. 0 to test the validity of the three motivational belief questionnaires and motivational regulation strategies questionnaire, and the results were in Tab. 2. Xu(2009) points out that the fit indexes of the structural equation models are not rigid; they are only for reference. It mainly depends on

whether most fit indexes are close to or reach the basic standards to judge whether the theoretical model fits the data. Since Chi-square Test is sensitive to sample size, the significance level of large-sample test( $n > 200$ ) is always below 0.05. Therefore, researchers are often more

concerned whether RMSEA meets the standard, to make up for the shortage of Chi-square Test. Tab. 2 showed that the fitness of the four models was good, and the four questionnaires had good structural validity.

**Tab. 2 The confirmatory factor analysis of the three motivational belief questionnaires and motivational regulation strategies questionnaire( $n=301$ )**

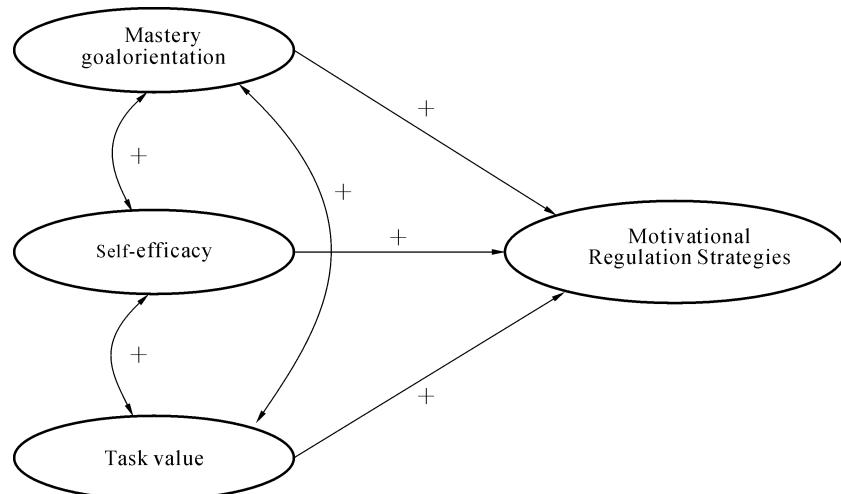
Questionnaires	$\chi^2$	$df$	$\chi^2 / df$	RMSEA	GFI	AGFI	IFI	CFI	RMR
Self-efficacy	411.001	151	2.722	0.076	0.870	0.836	0.877	0.876	0.068
Mastery goal-orientation	24.840	9	2.760	0.077	0.974	0.940	0.966	0.965	0.044
Task value	32.949	18	1.830	0.053	0.977	0.943	0.988	0.988	0.042
Motivational regulation strategies	38.552	17	2.268	0.065	0.969	0.934	0.976	0.976	0.023

### 3.3.3 Structural equation modeling

#### (1) Hypothetical structural equation modeling

Many researches show the three motivational beliefs have mutual effects on each other. For example, self-efficacy has significant positive relationship with mastery goal orientation (Zhu, 2012); task value also has significant positive relationship with mastery goal orientation (Braten & Olaussen, 2005); self-efficacy has significant positive relationship with task value

(Wigfield, et al., 2004). What's more, according to Wolters & Benzon's research (2013) on American college students, all the three motivational beliefs have different predictive effects on every dimension of motivational regulation strategies. Accordingly, this research makes the following predictions: The three motivational beliefs correlate with each other, and all of them have direct and positive effects on college students' use of motivational regulation strategies. The hypothetical model is shown in Fig. 1.



**Fig. 1 The hypothetic model of English learning motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies**

(2)Final structural equation modeling

This research took the three motivational beliefs as exogenous latent variables and the motivational regulation strategies as endogenous latent variable to establish a structural equation model with the maximum likelihood method of AMOS 17. 0. Since both mastery goal-orientation and task value only have one dimension, so they were treated as observed variables, and shown by rectangles.

Since structural equation modeling has statistical prerequisite, that is to say, the data should have normal distribution and have linear and correlation relationship with each other. If data have severe skew distribution, non-linear relationship and pseudo-correlation with each

other, no matter how well the statistical indexes meet the requirement, the conclusion is not reliable (Xu, 2009). Therefore, before modeling, normality test was made to test whether data of the three motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies are normally distributed. The results of the test were shown in Tab. 3. If the absolute values of the indexes of skewness and kurtosis are less than 1, the data are almost normally distributed(Qin,2009). Tab. 3 showed that all the skewness and kurtosis indexes of all the variables of this research were close to 0 and their absolute values were less than 1, which meant all the data were normally or nearly normally distributed and were suitable for the following confirmatory factor analysis.

**Tab. 3 The normality test results of non-English majors' English learning motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies(n=301)**

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Kurtosis
Learning ability self-efficacy	1.00	4.73	-0.201	-0.243
Learning behavior self-efficacy	1.00	4.62	-0.069	0.068
Mastery goal-orientation	2.00	5.00	-0.549	0.291
Task value	1.00	5.00	-0.458	0.428
Interest enhancement	1.14	5.00	-0.035	-0.062
Mastery self-talk	1.17	5.00	0.010	0.029
Task value enhancement	1.00	5.00	-0.232	-0.297
Self-efficacy enhancement	1.25	5.00	-0.114	-0.322
Performance self-talk	1.14	5.00	-0.281	0.228
Self-reward	1.00	5.00	-0.176	-0.237
Negative-based incentive	1.25	5.00	-0.231	-0.124
Volitional control	1.25	5.00	-0.234	0.061

## 4. Results

### 4. 1 The correlation analysis results of the relationship between motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies

Tab. 4 displays the means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of the

simple correlation analysis of the three motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies. The three motivational beliefs and motivational regulation strategies correlated significantly with each other ( $r=0.144 \sim 0.687$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which is suitable for structural equation modeling.

**Tab. 4 All the variables' means(M), standard deviation(SD) and correlation coefficient(n=301)**

	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Learning ability self-efficacy	1.000											
2	Learning behavior self-efficacy	0.687 **	1.000										
3	Mastery goal-orientation	0.341 **	0.272 **	1.000									
4	Task value	0.394 **	0.377 **	0.287 **	1.000								
5	Interest enhancement	0.391 **	0.430 **	0.295 **	0.261 **	1.000							
6	Mastery goal-orientation	0.444 **	0.495 **	0.455 **	0.379 **	0.594 **	1.000						
7	Task value enhancement	0.483 **	0.481 **	0.332 **	0.437 **	0.436 **	0.539 **	1.000					
8	Self-efficacy enhancement	0.423 **	0.413 **	0.432 **	0.365 **	0.480 **	0.667 **	0.459 **	1.000				
9	Performance self-talk	0.292 **	0.397 **	0.250 **	0.258 **	0.386 **	0.599 **	0.385 **	.487 **	1.000			
10	Self-reward	0.187 **	0.283 **	0.160 **	0.144 *	0.471 **	0.422 **	0.221 **	0.302 **	0.438 **	1.000		
11	Negative-based incentive	0.207 **	0.328 **	0.266 **	0.239 **	0.326 **	0.523 **	0.339 **	0.448 **	0.510 **	0.349 **	1.000	
12	Volitional control	0.212 **	0.251 **	0.306 **	0.154 *	0.429 **	0.470 **	0.229 **	0.358 **	0.354 **	0.465 **	0.355 **	1.000
	M	2,8932	2,8245	3,9252	3,4080	3,1305	3,2713	3,3599	3,5556	3,1723	2,9681	3,4709	3,5797
	SD	0.74292	0.67262	0.64222	0.74045	0.71475	0.65449	0.90882	0.75527	0.68000	0.79970	0.71603	0.71171

Note. \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

#### 4.2 The structural equation model of English learning motivational beliefs' effects on motivational regulation strategies

Fig. 2 is the final structural equation model of the effects of English learning motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies. The fitting degree indexes were as follows:  $\chi^2 = 136.381$ ,  $df = 49$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 2.783$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.077$ ,  $GFI = 0.925$ ,  $AGFI = 0.881$ ,  $IFI = 0.939$ ,  $CFI = 0.938$ ,  $RMR = 0.032$ . Each fitting degree index met the re-

quirement of practice and the fitting degree of the model was good. The total explanation rate was  $R^2 = 53\%$ , which meant that the exogenous variables of the three motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, mastery goal-orientation and task value correlated significantly with each other; all of them had direct and positive effects on the endogenous variable motivational regulation strategies and could explain its 53% variance. The specific effects of the three motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies are shown in Tab. 5.

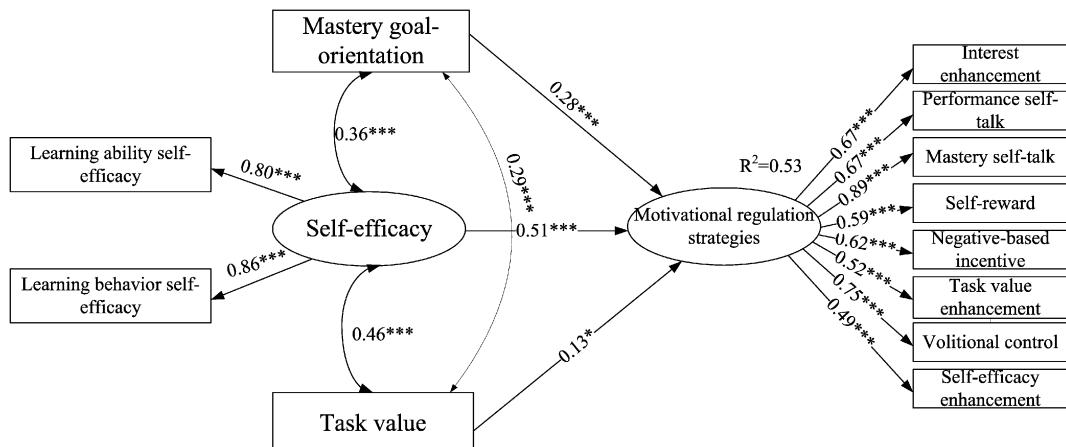


Fig. 2 The structural equation model of English learning motivational beliefs' effects on motivational regulation strategies

Note. \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$

Tab. 5 English learning motivational beliefs' effects on motivational regulation strategies

Dependent variable	Independent variables	$R^2$	Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect
Motivational regulation strategies		0.53			
	Self-efficacy		0.51	—	0.51
	Mastery goal-orientation		0.28	—	0.28
	Task value		0.13	—	0.13

Table 5 shows that all the three motivational beliefs have positive direct effects on motivational regulation strategies. Self-efficacy has the largest direct and positive

effects(0.51), mastery goal orientation has the second(0.28), and task value has the third(0.13).

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The internal relations among the three motivational regulation strategies

#### 5.1.1 Self-efficacy positively correlates with mastery goal-orientation

This research showed that self-efficacy positively correlated with mastery goal-orientation ( $r=0.36, p<0.001$ ), which agrees with many researches (Elliot & Dweck, 1998; Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Shell & Husman, 2008; Zhu, 2012). These researches all show that individuals with mastery goal-orientation tend to choose more challenging and valuable tasks, and try to promote the accomplishment of the task by taking various strategies. Facing difficulties, they often show more perseverance. They are more concerned with the improvement of their own abilities and levels as well as their mastery of the knowledge, by comparative reference to their previous levels. Thus, they always show more intense achievement motivation and self-efficacy, which leads to more prominent performance and better self-regulation abilities.

#### 5.1.2 Self-efficacy positively correlates with task value

This research showed that self-efficacy positively correlated with task value ( $r=0.46, p<0.001$ ), which agrees with the research of Wolters, et al. (1996). The longitudinal research of Wigfield, et al. (2004) shows that self-efficacy and task value take different roles in motivating students' moti-

vation. They interact with each other and work together to some extent. The improvement of the self-efficacy on one aspect helps to promote students' task value on it. At the same time, the higher the task value, the more intense the self-efficacy. Probably due to this reason, the self-efficacy and task value correlated significantly with each other in this research.

#### 5.1.3 Mastery goal-orientation positively correlates with task value

This research showed that goal-orientation positively correlated with task value ( $r=0.29, p<0.001$ ), which agrees with the researches of Wolters, et al. (1996) and Braten & Olaussen (2005). Many researches show that those individuals with mastery goal-orientation tend to more consider tasks' value. They would like to choose those tasks that can help to improve their abilities instead of those surpassing others. Mastery goal-orientation can predict task value (Eccles, 2005; Hulleman, et al., 2008; Harackiewicz, et al., 2008). Svinicki (2005) points out that if students realize the value of the learning task and have the confidence to accomplish the task, their learning motivation is much stronger and they have more mastery goal-orientation. Probably due to this reason, the mastery goal-orientation and task value correlated significantly with each other in this research.

## 5.2 The effects of the three motivational beliefs on motivational regulation strategies

### 5.2.1 The effect of self-efficacy on motivational regulation strategies

This research showed that self-efficacy had direct and positive effect on motivational regulation strategies ( $\beta = 0.51, p < 0.001$ ), which disagrees with the research results of Wolters & Rosenthal (2000), whose research on American high school students shows that self-efficacy can't predict any motivational regulation strategy. However, this result agrees with Wolters & Benzon (2013), whose research shows that self-efficacy can positively predict motivational regulation strategies.

This research also shows that among the three motivational beliefs, self-efficacy has the largest effect on motivational regulation strategies, which is different from the research result of Li (2008). His research shows that self-efficacy's effect is less than mastery goal-orientation.

Researches show that self-efficacy plays a key role in human's motivational regulation (Guo & Jiang, 2008: 79). There are three kinds of cognitive motivation in motivation theory of psychology: the causal attribution in attribution theory, the outcome expectancy in expectancy-value theory and cognitive goal in achievement goal theory (Bandura, 1992). Self-efficacy can play a role in all the different forms of cognitive motivation. According to expectancy-value theory, the intensity of motivation is co-controlled by the particular result and expected value of parti-

cular behavior. Self-efficacy has some impact on the outcome expectancy's effect on behavior controllable motivation. People with strong self-efficacy can still maintain efforts for a long time when facing uncertain repeated negative results (Guo & Jiang, 2008: 80). According to goal theory, people's behavior is motivated and guided by goals. Clear and challenging goals can improve behavior motivation. The goal achieving self-efficacy plays an important role in the self-active regulation resulted from goal-based cognitive motivation (Guo & Jiang, 2008: 80). What's more, the research result of Wolters & Benzon (2013) also shows that college students' self-efficacy can predict each dimension of motivation regulation strategies to some extent. This means the more confidence students have of their learning, the stronger their motivational regulation abilities are. Probably due to this reason, self-efficacy had the largest effect on the use of motivational regulation strategies in this research.

### 5.2.2 The effect of mastery goal-orientation on motivational regulation strategies

This research showed that mastery goal-orientation had direct and positive effects on motivational regulation strategies ( $\beta = 0.28, p < 0.001$ ), which agrees with many previous researches. Till now, many researches on the relationship between mastery goal-orientation and motivational regulation strategies have come to similar conclusions despite different subjects and different classification of motivational regulation strategies. Both Wolters' research on college students (1998) and Wolters' research

on high school students(1999) find that mastery goal-orientation positively correlates with motivational regulation strategies; mastery goal-orientation can explain the use of motivational regulation strategies. The same result is also found in the research on American high school students' mathematics learning by Wolters & Rosenthal(2000) and the research on American college students' learning by Wolters & Benzon(2013).

The researches of Wei(2013) and Xu & Li (2014) show that learners' second language's mastery goal-orientation can positively predict their self-regulated second language learning behavior. Wang(2009:84) points out that self-regulated learning includes the self-regulation and self-control of non-cognitive factors, like learning motivation, learning interests and emotional state. Since mastery goal-orientation can positively and significantly predict second language's self-regulated learning which includes motivation, it is sure to regulate and maintain motivation by the means of motivational regulation strategies. What's more, mastery goal-orientation is an internal-oriented motivational belief. Tab. 4 showed that its correlation with internal motivational regulation strategies( $r=0.295 \sim 0.455, p<0.01$ ) was higher than its correlation with external motivational regulation strategies( $r=0.160 \sim 0.266, p<0.01$ ). That means students with mastery goal-orientation tend to actively adopt internal motivational regulation strategies to maintain learning motivation and have strong initiative in learning. Probably due to this reason, the mastery goal-orientation could directly affect non-English

majors' use of motivational regulation strategies in this research.

### 5.2.3 The effect of task value on motivational regulation strategies

This research showed that task value had direct and positive effects on motivational regulation strategies( $\beta=0.13, p<0.05$ ), which agrees with the research results of Wolters & Benzon(2013). Their research also shows that task value can predict different dimensions of motivational regulation strategies. Wolters & Benzon (2013) point out that those students who think highly of learning tasks, want to study and have the confidence will tend to use motivational regulation strategies to maintain and improve their learning motivation.

This research also showed that among the three motivational beliefs, task value had the least effects on motivational regulation strategies. Tab. 4 showed the correlation between task value and internal regulation strategies, one of the three dimensions of motivational regulation strategies( $r=0.261 \sim 0.437, p<0.01$ ) was higher than its correlation with the other two dimensions of motivational regulation strategies, external regulation strategies( $r=0.144 \sim 0.258, p<0.05$ ) and volitional control strategies( $r=0.154, p<0.05$ ). What's more, task value's correlation with external regulation strategies and volitional control strategies can be statistically regarded as low correlation or even the lowest correlation, which is negligible. This shows that the task value of English learning itself can help students to have more tendencies to use internal regulation strategies instead of external regulation

strategies that intend to surpass others by performance. Therefore, task value only has large effects on internal regulation strategies, which leads to the result in this re-

search that among the three motivational beliefs, task value had the least effects on motivational regulation strategies.

## 6. Conclusion

This research took non-English majors as subjects to investigate the three motivational beliefs' effects on the use of English learning motivational regulation strategies, including self-efficacy, mastery goal-orientation and task value. The results were as follows: (1) Three motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, mastery goal orientation and task value correlated positively and significantly

with each other; (2) all of them had direct and positive effects on the use of motivational regulation strategies and could predict 53% variance of the use of motivational regulation strategies; (3) self-efficacy had the largest direct and positive effects, mastery goal orientation's effects were the second, and task values were the third.

## 7. Limitations and implications

The limitation of this research is that all the samples are collected in a single college. Future researches may expand the collection of samples to more areas and more levels of subjects to enrich the researches on motivational beliefs' effects on motivational regulation strategies. Furthermore, structural equation model can only confirm whether the model is reasonable or not; it can't decide whether the model is the most suitable or best model. Therefore, the model proposed by this research maybe one of those probable models. It can't be proved to be the only best model. There may be some factors that remain to be included, which are also the future research directions.

The implication of this research is that college English teachers should pay attention to cultivate students' self-efficacy, mas-

tery goal-orientation and task value, which is beneficial for students' effective use of motivational regulation strategies to maintain their learning motivation. Teachers should especially cultivate students' self-efficacy, for their motivational regulation abilities will be more prominent when they are more confident with their English learning abilities and learning behaviors.

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# Autonomy as a Manifestation Reflected from English Learning via Internet after Class

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**Abstract:** This qualitative study focuses on the process of university students' English learning via the Internet after class in China, using weekly meetings (group discussion), reflective reports and interviews to investigate learners' beliefs about learning and to get to know how they learn English via the Internet after class. The study also explores whether the Internet plays a supportive role, enabling students to experience a free, comfortable and collaborative learning environment, and builds a place where students can manage their own learning. Learner autonomy refers to a capacity, which is to take control of one's learning (Benson, 2011). It has been manifested by the individual learners' differences (Reinders, 2000, Jiménez Raya & Lamb, 2003), such as the factor of learner beliefs and also it has been reflected from the learning process. This paper will merely present one of the findings from the analysis of the data, which shows on the participants' capacity of autonomy in their English learning.

**Keywords:** Internet-assisted learning, Learner autonomy, Learner beliefs

## 1. Introduction

The term “autonomy” is presently very popular in China. It has rapidly developed as a central concern, not only in English Language education, but in all subjects studied in educational research (Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, 2007). This paper will focus on the participants’ capacity of autonomy in their English learning, especially in the learning environment of the Internet, which aims to get access to explore their autonomy and to understand how the Internet builds a place

where students can manage their own learning.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1 Learner autonomy

The original term “learner autonomy” first entered the field of language teaching in the Council of Europe’s Modern Language Project, which was established in 1971. During this project, the Centre for Research and Applications in Language Teaching (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy, France, was set up. Consequently, research on autonomy became a central topic in the language-teaching field. The founder of CRAPEL, Yves Chalon, is considered to be the father of autonomy in language learning. However, after his death in 1972, Henri Holec became the new director of CRAPEL; his contribution to the field cannot be underestimated. For instance, in 1976, he led a seminar at the University of Cambridge to disseminate the idea of autonomy; and his project report (1981) to the Council of Europe presented a definition of autonomy that has become a key early document underpinning the approach (Holec, 1981). When considering a definition of learner autonomy, it is necessary to state Holec’s concept as it is fundamental and also the most frequently cited. In Holec’s (1981) report to the Council of Europe, autonomy is regarded as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning” (p. 3). As such, Holec’s definition of autonomy is as follows:

To take charge of one’s own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for

all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i. e. :

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.);
- evaluating what has been acquired.

—Holec & Council of Europe(1981)

Holec’s definition centred on the responsibility for learning and that learners need to make all decisions during the learning process according to their needs. With the development of the subject there have been various iterations and definitions seeking to expand on the central concept. David Little has elaborated the definition of autonomy by referring to a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It is necessary that learners develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and the content of their learning. This capacity is not only shown in how the learner learns, but is also expressed in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts (Little, 1991). The two definitions by Holec and Little effectively express the nature of autonomy; specifically, autonomy as an individual capacity. Learners should set their own personal learning goals in accordance

with their own learning needs. Moreover, Dickinson(1987) has also defined autonomy as “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions”. In his definition, he employs the term “full autonomy” to explain that learners are fully independent from teachers, institutions, or specially prepared materials. They take full freedom to make their own decisions. However, autonomy does not necessarily mean to connote learning that is absolutely independent of a teacher’s guidance. Also it does not mean that in class teachers will do nothing and learners get along with everything as best as they can(Little, 1990). Successful language learning is both individual and collaborative. Although Dickinson points out for full autonomy to be present, it is not necessary that learners be fully independent or working alone(Benson, 2011). It is also argued that autonomy should be recognised principally according to three aspects in which a learner takes control: learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content (Benson, 2011). Learning management means controlling behaviours, which relates to plans, organisation, and evaluation of learning, and is classified into two aspects: self-directed learning and learning strategies. Cognitive processes refer to psychological factors, such as attention, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge. Also, taking control over learning content is a part of learning management; it focuses on the “what” and “why” aspects of language learning(Benson, 2011). The process of English learning via

the Internet after class has the capacity to allow students to take responsibility for, and control of, their study. Students shape their learning according to established learning goals, personal needs, preferred learning methods, and appropriate learning levels, etc. In conclusion, autonomous learners tend to be more motivated, more aware, and more proactive(Lamb & Reinders, 2005). It is a modern development that informs and enables English learning management, cognitive processes, and English learning content.

In the literature on autonomy, it is suggested that taking control of the cognitive process will help individuals to guide their learning. This process relies on the development of metacognitive knowledge (Lamb, 2006a), which, along with metacognitive skills, constitutes the metacognition defined by Wenden as the knowledge of knowledge (Wenden, 1998). There is a difference between metacognitive knowledge and skills: Knowledge refers to personal knowledge (knowledge of the learner itself), task knowledge (knowledge of the learning task), and strategic knowledge (knowledge of the learning strategies that are selected to use for tasks)(Flavell, 1979); metacognitive skills are the general skills, which are used in managing or guiding learning. That is to say, metacognitive skills abide in the aspects of planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning (Wenden, 1998). Also Wenden (1998) has restated the concept of task knowledge as being of particular importance; she describes task knowledge as understanding the purposes and demands of a task. Decisions about a learning task have an

interrelationship with decisions on learning content, learning place and time, learning strategies' selection, and also evaluation standards. Whenever a learning task is just learning a single word, the learners had better depend on their knowledge of the language and language learning to motivate them to finish that task. Therefore, metacognition outlines a procedure by which metacognitive knowledge is deployed.

## 2.2 Learner autonomy in China

The term "autonomy" is presently very popular in China. It has rapidly developed as a central concern, not only in English Language education, but in all subjects studied in educational research (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2007). However, there is a suggestion that learner autonomy is unsuitable in the Chinese context. Both Benson(1996) and Pennycook(1997) mentioned that autonomy is appropriate in the West. Also Chinese learners are sometimes regarded as rote learners and learn just by rote and memory (Martinsons & Martinsons, 1996; Chow, 1995). Even in some Western literature they are called the "tape recorders" (Biggs, 1996). The fact is that, in China, memorization cannot be separated from understanding. Chinese learners depend on memorization for a deeper understanding, and usually learn by combining memorization and understanding. This learning method has been called "memorization with understanding" (Marton, et al., 1996). The reason why this learning method is prevalent in China is due to cultural issues. Traditional Chinese culture plays a sig-

nificant influence on learning. Typically, in "Confucianism", there are five key relationships, as suggested by Fan(2000), thus:

- a. Master and follower: Loyalty and duty;
- b. Father and son: Love and obedience;
- c. Husband and wife: Obligation and submission;
- d. Elder and younger brothers: Seniority and model;
- e. Friend and friend: Trust.

—Fan(2000)

The five relationships influence both Chinese teachers and students. Teachers play the role of authority or parents, and offer not only the knowledge, but also moral guidance to students (Rao & Chan, 2009). Students are required to be obedient to teachers. After a long time, the students feel comfortable to follow the teachers' guidance, step-by-step, and forget their own creativity. This teacher-centered learning approach is deeply ingrained in the Chinese education system. On the other hand, in ancient China, there were other ideas about learning. For example: "Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime." Fish are the goal and fishing is the method. To eat one fish, you will be full in that moment; if you want to eat fish forever and free yourself from hunger, you need to learn to fish. That is to say, if you help someone to figure out a problem, it is better to help them identify the problem-solving pattern, rather than give the answer to one puzzle. "If three people are together, surely there is a teacher for me among them; I can choose

something good about him and follow it, or something bad about him and change it" (The Analects of Confucius). This tells people to be modest and critical in learning. Chinese students are trying to combine traditional and new learning approaches to achieve their goals. Actually, they like teachers to guide them but they still want to have their own space to develop their own ideas (Rao & Chan, 2009). Moreover, Fu Qiaoxia has explicated the definition of autonomous learning as follows: "Autonomous learning combines with the learner's attitude and ability; it refers to a learner who is taking charge of learning, which is mainly manifested in awareness and understanding of learning goals, learning content, learning strategy and learning materials" (Fu, 2012). The learner has the freedom to make decisions about their learning in respect of these aspects. However, this issue is also related to the degree of freedom given by schools or teachers, where a degree of freedom is supplied to learners in a certain education environment. It is not an absolute freedom shaped by overriding education goals. Finally, autonomous learning is a learning mode whose environment is guided by the main education goals, teacher's instructions, and the learners' ability to make plans and finish learning tasks, according to personal needs. As such, education in university is a more suitable environment to support autonomous learning(Fu, 2012). At university level, autonomous learning plays a significant role. It is manifested that the education environment is quite different between universities and primary and secondary schools. Students

in universities have the characteristics of higher-level learning and clear subject major directions; their learning is flexible and complex and needs to be discovered and researched. Besides, university students also have a certain freedom in, and expectation of, independent learning. They will be treated as adults. Thus, to succeed and accomplish learning tasks, students must possess self-management, self-control, and self-evaluation skills in their studies. While university teachers are required to teach learning skills, acquiring knowledge is the students' mainly responsibility. In English language learning, after studying at primary and middle schools, students have a fundamental accumulation of English language, in terms of, vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar (Fu, 2012). English learning in universities aims to promote pragmatic English skills in listening, writing, reading, and speaking (Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2007). Students are expected to utilise English in certain real world tasks, so the "spoon-feeding" method of teaching is not enough to satisfy the requirements at university. English language learning is a long process, during which students' learning skills obviously become more and more proficient, so it is necessary for every university student to have an understanding of how to learn and also how to learn both independently and collaboratively. Autonomous learning is an important topic in the current field of educational research. It is regarded as an important and effective learning mode by many scholars throughout the world. To cultivate learner autonomy not

only benefits English learning, but also spreads good practice to other subjects. As a lifelong ability, it is potentially beneficial for society as a whole (Fu, 2012), as has been addressed in other academic studies, such as Xue's report of "the study of collaborative autonomous English learning mode via Internet environment in universities" (Xue, 2013), Wang's article on "teachers' role in Chinese EFL learner autonomy" (Wang, 2004), and Rao's thesis on "helping Chinese EFL students develop learner autonomy through portfolios" (Rao, 2006).

### 2.3 Internet-assisted language learning

Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a term coined by Levy. It has been argued that CALL has been widely applied in existing EFL practices to promote learner autonomy. Meanwhile, research into CALL has become a continuously expanding concern, which now constitutes a large branch in the field of education and linguistics (Fitzpatrick & Davies, 2003). More recently, the Internet has come to offer opportunities to supplement and upgrade traditional CALL (Dudeney, 2007; Walker, et al., 2012). The past two decades have seen the Internet substantially change both human behaviour and wider society; consequently, it has inevitably influenced the attitudes and behaviours of EFL learners. For example, it changes students' motivations; it provides opportunities for students to use English in their everyday life; it affords students a vast amount of first-hand material that people use in their real life; and it offers new tools

for students to develop new learning strategies (Dudeney, 2007; Walker, et al., 2012). Rapid developments in technology have changed people's daily lives. Modern information technology influences education and changes approaches to both learning and teaching. Modern China is also an information society, based on science and technology. Making use of modern technology and applying it to the field of education is a necessary demand. Qian Xuesen, a famous Chinese scientist, stated that education in the future should be a combination of human brain, computer, and the Internet (Qian, 2008). Indeed, new technologies, especially the Internet-assisted kind, have been applied in educational settings, connecting words, sounds, pictures, and videos to transmit impactful information. This brings a lot of vigour and vitality into the classroom. It is the beginning of significant reforms, not only in teaching methodology, but also in learning (Zang, 2010). The future direction of English learning in China will develop with the dissemination of technology, especially the Internet. English learning websites supply an opportunity for the motivated individual to undertake learning in an environment that learners can mould and manipulate, selecting their learning activities and content according to their personal goals, thereby encouraging autonomous learning. English learning via appropriate websites could effectively foster or support autonomous learning (Xue, 2013). The development of autonomous learning strategies, and the new technologies embedded in education, alongside the demands of English curriculum requirements

in universities, requires a new learning mode that combines autonomous learning and modern information technology, thereby enabling English learning to become individual and autonomous, without the limitations of time and place.

Autonomous learning via the Internet refers to a learning process in which the learner makes good use of the Internet, and takes control of metacognitive knowledge, learning motivation and learning behaviours. The Internet is a virtual infrastructure that connects all the world's computers together to form a network brimming with information and interactive communication (Beale, 2010). Specifically, it is a service centre and has a variety of services, such as e-mail, discussion groups, file transfer, the web or World Wide Web (WWW). It is worth mentioning that the World Wide Web refers to the key information resources on the Internet, and that information can take the form of text, pictures, videos, sound, or, increasingly, multi-media content (Atkinson & CILT, 1998). The World Wide Web is ac-

cessed by the Internet and is a model for sharing information based on the Internet. The Web is only one way to disseminate and share information via the Internet. It is necessary to use browsers, such as Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, or Firefox (Beale, 2010) to search for information. Web-based learning (WBL) is a promotion of CALL and is a kind of Internet-assisted learning mode. Thus WBL can also be called e-learning or online learning. There are some online courses, lectures, discussion boards, etc., on the Web. The most valuable function of WBL is its access to a large number of web-based learning materials and information (McKimm, Jollie & Cantillon, 2003). Its technical advantages are evident in its facility for quickly updating content, as well as hyperlinks, which permit cross-referencing to other resources. In education, WBL is complementary with constructivist learning theories (Chumley-Jones, Dobbie & Alford, 2002), in which learning requires that learners are fully involved in decisions about the content and processes (Benson, 2011).

### 3. Methodology

In this study, the qualitative multiple case study has been adopted as the main approach based on the constructivist perspective, which aims to get more data and have a better understanding. Specifically, the design of this study includes two cases: two groups of students from two different universities in China and focuses on the process of two

groups of students' English learning via the Internet, after class, using weekly meetings (group discussion), reflective-reports and interviews to investigate learners' beliefs about learning, to get to know how they learn English via the Internet after class and what they have gained after participating in this project.

## 4. Discussion

This section provides a discussion on learner autonomy, which is emphasized on a capacity of English learning manifested from the participants' metacognitive knowledge and their learning process. The development of the participants' overall awareness has been shown on their knowledge of themselves as learners and their learning process by discussing with other students and developing their reflective thinking. As mentioned before, learner autonomy refers to a capacity, which is to take control of one's learning (Benson, 2011). It has been manifested by the individual learners' differences (Reinders, 2000, Jiménez Raya and Lamb, 2003), such as the learner beliefs and it also has been reflected from learning process. Thus the following paragraphs will present the findings from the analysis of the data, which shows on three aspects: Firstly, analysis will be focuses on its manifestation in the participants' beliefs of English learning, especially with the discussion of metacognitive knowledge. Then it will be emphasized on its manifestation in English learning process via the Internet after class, which refers to the analysis on how the participants control their English learning after class. And the final aspect will address on that the participants' reflection and awareness also could be manifested autonomy.

### 4. 1 Autonomy manifestation in the participants' beliefs of English learning

A number of studies have proved that young learners or even children do have

their autonomy in their learning situation (see for example, Ellis, 1998; Lamb, 2005; Sinclair, 1999 etc.). In accordance with the definition of learner autonomy, which refers to decisions concerning all aspects of learning, such as on determining the objectives, defining the contents, selecting methods, monitoring the procedure and evaluating what has been acquired (Holec & Council of Europe, 1981). These decisions have been influenced by learners' beliefs of English learning. The participants have mentioned that they are making important decisions concerning their English learning. For example, they want to promote their English abilities in listening, speaking, writing and reading to meet their personal learning goals. Therefore, they choose different kinds of English learning methods and they pay attention on English learning even after class. Such as the participants use the Internet to learn English after class; they are taking the online courses, searching the information, communicating with others in English and they are trying to learn English on their own by watching English dramas and films and reading English articles etc. If autonomy is regarded as a capacity of learners to take control of their learning (Benson, 2011) and promote critical thinking of what to learn and how to learn it (Sinclair, 1999), then these participants actually have this capacity when they make decisions of their learning. As for the participants' beliefs of English learning, autonomy has been shown from

their learning experiences in many aspects. For example, the participants believe that English is a kind of ability, so they think that they need to have more practices on speaking English with others, then they use the Internet's virtual environment to communicate with others in English. Also from their beliefs of their roles and responsibilities, they all admit that the hard work will bring them to success. Although they address that they need more support from teachers, they still should be responsible for their own learning. Specifically, as mentioned before, learner belief has been regarded as metacognitive knowledge by Wenden (1986a). Which refers to learners' knowledge of language, learning and the language learning process; the metacognitive knowledge plays a significant role when learners make decisions on their learning. And it can facilitate learners' autonomous thinking and behaviours. For example, Lamb (2005) has addressed that the necessity of this type of knowledge in self-management and self-regulation for learners' own learning. Thus metacognitive knowledge is an important component of autonomy. The participants all show that they have the knowledge of what they are learning about English, how they learn it and why they choose this method. In other words, the participants have the knowledge of English learning content, English learning motivation and English learning methods. There are three types of knowledge within metacognitive knowledge, personal knowledge, task knowledge and strategic knowledge (Flavell, 1979). All the participants show that they have the knowl-

edge about their English learning, for example, their weakness or strengths. They all admit that they should be responsible for their own learning, and they do so, such as, they take control of their English learning after class via the Internet to develop their language skills. And the participants choose different types of strategy based on their knowledge of language and their knowledge of how to complete the tasks. However, they still mentioned that they need more support from teachers in their learning, such as on the aspects of suggestions and feedbacks. Learner autonomy does not necessarily mean to connote learning that is absolutely independent of a teacher's guidance. Also it does not mean that in class teachers will do nothing and learners get along with everything as best as they can (Little & Singleton, 1990). Successful language learning is both individual and collaborative, and it is necessary to have teachers as facilitators.

#### 4. 2 Autonomy manifestation in English learning process via the Internet after class

From the participants' learning process via the Internet after class, which shows that the participants taking control of their English learning. The discussion here based on Benson's(2011)framework includes three aspects: taking control of learning content, cognitive processes, and learning management (Benson, 2011). Generally speaking, the participants pay much attention on English learning even after class and choose the Internet to learn English to achieve learning goals and to develop their language skills.

Specifically, from the aspect of taking control of learning content, the participants show that they choose different kinds of learning materials from the Internet, such as, news, articles, videos, dramas and films etc., to develop their silks in English. Taking control over learning content is a part of learning management with the focuses on “what” and “why” aspects of language learning (Benson, 2011). And taking control over learning management, the participants show their capacity of controlling mainly on the aspects of plans and learning strategy. From the analysis of data, the participants present how they choose activities to meet their learning needs. And from the aspect of cognitive processes, which refers to psychological factors, such as attention, reflection, and metacognitive knowledge. The participants’ metacognitive knowledge facilitates them in their learning, such as on selecting English learning methods, choosing the English learning content and setting the learning goals. Thus the process of English learning via the Internet after class provides an environment to allow students to take responsibility for, and control of, their study. Students shape their learning according to established learning goals, personal needs, preferred learning methods, and appropriate learning levels, etc. In conclusion, autonomous learners tend to be more motivated, more aware, and more proactive (Lamb & Reinders, 2005). From the analysis of data, autonomous learning via the Internet refers to a learning process in which the participants make good use of the Internet, and take controls of metacognitive knowledge,

learning motivation and learning behaviours.

#### 4.3 Autonomy manifestation in the participants’ reflection and awareness

During the process of this research, the participants’ reflections have impact on their awareness. Their reflections have been explored by means of their writing on reflective reports, their weekly meetings and their final interviews. Benson (2011) and Sinclair (2000) all have addressed that reflection of one’s self and learning is an essential capacity for learners to have if they are autonomous. In other words, Sinclair (2000) has stated, “Developing autonomy requires consciousness of the learning process, i.e., conscious reflection and decision making. If autonomy is a construct of capacity, the development of metacognitive awareness in the learner ... is crucial”. In this research, the participants’ reflections show the development of their metacognitive awareness. Such as on the development of their personal knowledge, some of the participants have mentioned that they become clearer about themselves, their weakness and strengths, and gain a more precisely English learning target by the reflective writing and discussion with other participants in group. Also they have mentioned that they have developed their capacity of making decisions on English learning; they know what to learn and gain many learning methods, in which some of the methods have been suggested by their classmates and some of them have been explored by themselves. In other words, the

participants have gained the reflective thinking about themselves as learners, about their English learning. In which they mentioned this research has raised their awareness about themselves and their English learning. Such as, they reported at the final interview

two main issues: One is about group discussion (they all present the benefits of group discussion), and the other is their capacity of English, in which they have mentioned that their role and responsibilities in English learning, then to be autonomous.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper explains the participants' autonomy of English learning from a qualitative study conducted in China context, which shows that Chinese learners have acquired this ability of taking control of their English learning, and proves that autonomy is also suitable in the Chinese cultural context, and different contexts are likely to produce different practices and outcomes. Also it has presented that the technology, for example, the Internet, which provides a virtual learning environment to help learners to develop their English learning skills, thus autonomy. More importantly, this article also addresses on the importance of teachers' guidance. From the viewpoint of the participants, they do need teachers' guidance in their English learning, and autonomous learning does not mean to learn it on their own. They need both teachers' guidance and friends' suggestions, thus to state that in China context a successive English learning should combine with the autonomous learning and collaborative learning.

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# Autonomous Learning Ability in MOOC Learning Process

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**Abstract:** MOOC, one of the immense education theories and pedagogical innovation in 21th century, is altering the relationship between teaching and learning. Therefore, teaching and learning researches are to be the focus in the field of education. This paper bases on the MOOC's characters, teaching theories, learning theories to discuss the autonomous learning ability for massive learners. The research results indicates that autonomous learning ability can improve the MOOC learning effect. Besides, learners possess specific learning aims, initiatively apply to learning strategies, reasonably evaluate learning effect by themselves or with learning companions, promptly monitor learning process and timely propose learning feedback in the whole process of MOOC learning, which demonstrates MOOC learning is benefit to accelerate learners' autonomous learning. Moreover, MOOC learning entitles fresh conception for autonomous learning ability. First of all, learners must have autonomous discriminability to select some suitable, loveable, helpful courses by themselves when they face all kinds of courses in the MOOC learning platform. Secondly, autonomous participation ability plays a significant role in MOOC learning process. You take part in your courses and join in discussion; you complete your learning task and process. MOOC learning endows new meaning for autonomous learning.

**Keywords:** MOOC, Autonomous learning ability, Autonomous participation ability

## 1 Instruction

A Massive Open Online Course(MOOC) is an online course aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web.<sup>[1]</sup> In addition to traditional course materials such as

filmed lectures, readings, and problem sets, many MOOCs provide interactive user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants(TAs). The MOOC is a recent and widely researched development in distance education which was first introduced in 2008 and emerged as a popular mode of learning in 2012.<sup>[2][3]</sup> Therefore, the MOOC, a kind of innovation online education, features opening, autonomy and individuation. Based on its characters, this paper will state the relationship between MOOCs and college English autonomous learning. So this paper will

achieve the following aims.

Aim one, analyze the correlation between MOOCs and college English autonomous learning to propose some strategies of improving learner autonomous learning ability from the field of MOOCs and present the function of MOOCs in the autonomous learning scope.

Aim two, if MOOCs relate to the college English autonomous learning, this paper will analyze and conclude MOOCs have positive correlation with autonomous learning and how they affect the autonomous learning ability.

## 2. MOOC and autonomous learning

The first MOOC emerged from the open educational resources (OER) movement. The term *MOOC* was coined in 2008 by Dave Cormier of the University of Prince Edward Island in response to a course called *Connectivism and Connective Knowledge (also known as CCK08)*. CCK08, which was led by George Siemens of Athabasca University and Stephen Downes of the National Research Council, consisted of 25 tuition-paying students in Extended Education at the University of Manitoba, as well as over 2200 online students from the general public who paid nothing.<sup>[4]</sup> According to *The New York Times*, 2012 became “the year of the MOOC” as several well-financed providers, associated with top universities, emerged, including Coursera, Udacity, and edX.<sup>[2][5]</sup> The number of courses offered has since increased dramatically: As of January 2016, Edx offers 820 courses, Coursera offers 1,

580 courses and Udacity offers more than 120 courses. According to FutureLearn, the British Council’s Understanding IELTS has an enrollment of over 440,000 students.<sup>[6]</sup>

Early MOOCs often emphasized open-access features, such as open licensing of content, structure and learning goals, to promote the reuse and remixing of resources. Some later MOOCs use closed licenses for their course materials while maintaining free access for students.<sup>[7][8][9][10]</sup> Robert Zemsky(2014) argues that they have passed their peak: “They came; they conquered very little; and now they face substantially diminished prospects.”<sup>[11]</sup> Others have pointed to a backlash arising from the tiny completion rates.<sup>[12]</sup> Therefore, the MOOC is not only a form of course, but they generate a new learning method and pattern. To some extend, that is coincidence with autonomous learning.

Moreover, in the field of teaching theory, autonomous learning is one of the significant

teaching methods. In the learning domain, autonomous learning is one of the effective learning methods. Feng Lixin (2013) researches the self-access learning strategies of 251 college non-English majors in the web-based and multimedia environment and explores that the strategy training has emerged on a positive effect on the experimental classes.<sup>[13]</sup> Xu Jinfen, Peng Renzhong and Wu Weiguo (2004), according to the analysis of the collected data of autonomous learning ability of non-English major college students, found that college students' autonomous learning ability is only at the low level, and suggested that it is emergent to change the teaching and learning concept and belief between teachers and students.<sup>[14]</sup>

### 3. Research process

#### 3.1 Participants

The participants are 100 non-English majors from Hunan Agricultural University, but disposed of 18 invalid questionnaires and received 82 questionnaires. In addition, all of them are sophomores, who are taught by the same teacher and used the same student book. They have at least 1 year MOOC learning experience and two years college English autonomous learning experience.

#### 3.2 Instruments

This paper employs the learner autonomy questionnaire that is one tool of testing college English autonomous learning learners' competence, which was originally designed by Xu Jinfen (2004) to investigate non-English major undergraduates' learner autonomy. It has been

employed by many researchers and proved already to be reliable as well as valid to test students' learner autonomy.

In addition, this paper adopts the IELTS evaluation system to assess some students' MOOC learning effect.

#### 3.3 Data administration and analysis

Reasonable data administration and analysis are the vital guarantee to attain valid data and supply clear analysis result for the present research. This study puts emphasis on quantitative survey data. After data collection, completed questionnaires were coded and scored. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS for Mac version 20) was used for the data administration and analysis.

### 4. Research results

#### 4.1 Correlation between MOOCs and college English autonomous learning

In order to initially examine the interre-

lationship of MOOCs and the college English autonomous learning, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficients were computed for the independent and dependent variables to test the linear relationships pro-

posed. Tab. 1 illustrates the correlation relationships between MOOCs and college English autonomous learning.

As can be seen in Tab. 1, there is a significant correlation between MOOCs and college autonomous learning, ( $r = .786$ ,  $Sig. = .000 < .01$ ) which expounds MOOC learning is able to have an effect on students' autonomous learning ability.

**Tab. 1 Correlations between MOOCs and college English autonomous learning**

		MOOCs
English Autonomous learning	Pearson correlation	.786 <sup>**</sup>
	Sig. (2-tail)	.000
	N	82

#### 4.2 Predicting college English autonomous learning category with MOOC dimension

To determine whether MOOC dimensions best predict college autonomous English learning categories or not, the research applied stepwise multiple regression analyses to perform with MOOC dimensions as independent variables and college auto-

mous English learning categories as dependent variables. The exactly result will be presented in the following regression models.

In the regression model, this model summary (Tab. 2) shows that the MOOC enters the regression equation as a significant predicting variable at a significant level ( $.000$ ); the MOOC accounts for 61.8% of the variance of autonomous learning ( $R^2 = .618$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .613$ ), which is statistically significant in helping to predict college English autonomous learning.

**Tab. 2 Model summary**

Model summary				
Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjust R <sup>2</sup>	SE
1	.786a	.618	.613	5.112

a. predictive variable: MOOC

The significance of the regression model was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics generated as part of the regression procedure. Findings (Tab. 3) indicated that the predictors (MOOC) included in the model were significantly associated with the dependent variable, autonomous learning ability.  $F = 129.300$ ,  $Sig. = .000 < .01$ .

**Tab. 3 Anova a Anova<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3379.196	1	3379.196	129.300	.000b
	Residual	2090.756	80	26.134		
	total	5469.951	81			

a. Dependent variable: college autonomous learning

b. Predictive variable: (constant), MOOC

In Tab. 4, the t-values indicate that the most important variable for predicting students' college English autonomous learn-

ing is the MOOC ( $t = 11.371 > 2$ ,  $Sig. = .000 < 0.01$ ) in this model. The variables have a positive relationship with college English

autonomous learning, which suggests that MOOC learning will be accompanied by the learning.

Tab. 4 Model coefficients

Model		Coefficients				
		Unstandardized Coefficients				
		B	SE	Beta	t	Sig.
1	Constant	48.226	3.458		13.945	.000
	MOOC	7.442	.654	.786	11.371	.000

Dependent variable: English autonomous learning ability

To sum up, the step liner regression analysis reveals the correlation between MOOCs and autonomous learning ability of the college students; the MOOC has a signif-

icant effect on autonomous learning ability and predict the autonomous learning ability of the college students.

## 5. Discussion and implication

According to correlation analysis and regression analysis, there are significant relationships between MOOCs and autonomous learning. In a word, MOOC learning has a significant effect on autonomous learning and benefits to autonomous learning. Adopting the MOOC learning pattern is good for improving autonomous learning ability for students.

Moreover, MOOC learning entitles fresh conception for autonomous learning ability.

First of all, learners must have autonomous discriminability to select some suitable, loveable, helpful courses by themselves when they face all kinds of courses in the MOOC learning platform. Secondly, autonomous participation ability plays a significant role in MOOC learning process. You take part in your courses and join in discussion; you complete your learning tasks and process. MOOC learning endows new meaning for autonomous learning.

## 6. Conclusion

The research aims at exploring the current situation of Chinese non-English major undergraduates' MOOCs and learner autonomy. And it also investigates the relationship between the two variables and the influence of MOOCs on learner autonomy. Although this research attains some achieve-

ment between MOOCs and autonomous learning, there are also some limitations: The sample is too small compared with the large number of non-English major undergraduates in China, and all the participants come from the same university, which means that the results obtained from the study

might not be universal. The research results need to be further verified among larger number of subjects.

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# The Cultivation of College Students' Learner Autonomy in Information Era

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**Abstract:** Researchers have been aware that learner autonomy is crucially important in improving learning efficiency, and have done lots of researches to explore the training mode of learner autonomy. But in the era of information technology, all kinds of open learning methods, such as MOOCs, micro courses, and flipped classroom, have given rise to new teaching concepts and teaching modes, which will certainly influence students' learning habits and strategies. With more learning resources and methods, the cultivating of learner autonomy is of more significance. At the same time, in the information era how to cultivate learner autonomy is worth researching.

**Keywords:** Information era, Learner autonomy

Characterized by big data, digital technology, "Internet +", information age has brought in the third industrial revolution, which has huge impact on higher education. In the era of information technology, various open learning methods, such as MOOCs, micro courses, and flipped classroom, have presented both opportunities and challenges to the traditional mode of school education. On the one hand, learners have more high quality learning resources, which is beneficial to college students who have always had

strong interest in new things. Information era extends students learning from the class inside to classroom outside. On the other hand, the variety and complexity of the network resources require students' good learner autonomy. Learner autonomy is essential for lifelong learning, and is never more significant than in the era of information technology. This paper tries to explore the significance of cultivating college students' learner autonomy and how to promote learner autonomy effectively.

# I . The significance of researching the cultivation of college students' learner autonomy in information age

Henri Holec (1981) firstly brought about the definition of learner autonomy into second language teaching field, which sparked many different definitions of learner autonomy from different perspectives.

Researches abroad cover many aspects, including definitions of learner autonomy, different levels of autonomous learning, principles of promoting learner autonomy, characteristics of autonomous learners, teachers' roles in promoting learner autonomy, etc. In recent years, researchers have been transferred to the establishment of self-access centers, strategies and training modes on promoting learner autonomy, establishment of autonomous learning resources.

Researches on learner autonomy at home began in the 1990s, which was almost twenty years later than the studies abroad. According to Gao (2005), researches on learner autonomy from 1991 to 2000 was the beginning stage. There were three features of the researches in that period. First, among the limited researches, the research subject was not clearly divided restricted. Second, almost all the researches were theoretical, and were focused on the introduction of the outcomes of western researches. Since 2001, researches on learner autonomy have obviously increased. The researches extend into six aspects: (1) the practicability and necessity of learner autonomy; (2) investigation

and influential factors of learner autonomy; (3) exploration of the models of learner autonomy; (4) construction of the environment of learner autonomy; (5) researches of teachers' roles and teacher autonomy; (6) the current researched both at home.

Undoubtedly researchers on learner autonomy have developed a lot, but there are still many aspects worth researching. First, many researches attempt to explore the influential factors of learner autonomy, but a consensus has not been reached. More empirical researches are needed. Second, students have different learning environment and have access to different resources in information age, which greatly influences their learning methods. In accordance with that, teachers should adjust their beliefs and methods to meet students' needs. Third, during the research on independent learning, new problems have aroused. For example, in some researches researchers (Ma & Zhao, 2016) have found that the proficient students have improved in a big degree while the nonproficient students have fallen behind greatly in flipped classroom. Some researchers (Ming, 2016) have found that in information age, with so many Internet resources available, most students lack the ability to plan their learning. They always choose what they learn randomly, and lack clear targets and systematic design. Forth, students are always changing. In information

age, they are more creative and individual. They may also have other characteristics unlike their former generations. Only by exploring their unique features, can individual

learning be realized. So more researches on cultivation of learner autonomy are necessary and significant.

## II . The talents needed in information age

Information era has boosted education modernization, which includes information education, lifelong education, open education based on the Internet, active learning, and individualized education.

Living in information age, young people must learn to survive and develop themselves. As long as they have the basic characteristics of the people of information society, they can meet the needs of the third industrial revolution. Western scholars summarized people's basic qualities in information society.

Those characteristics are as follows: a. being able to acquire information and use network; b. being innovative and good at decentralized cooperation in a creative way; c. being adept in developing and perfecting

themselves, and reaching a consensus in sharing and communicating; d. in favor of more personal, uncertain, open multiple ways of thinking, and in pursuit of cultivation of critical thinking.

From the above characteristics, we can see the ability of learner autonomy is highly needed and stressed in the information era. Only with good learner autonomy, can we make good use of various Internet resources and improve ourselves continuously. Our creative abilities are also based on inner desire of personal development instead of passive learning. Learner autonomy is also the inevitable requirement in an age where knowledge and technology are updated rapidly.

## III . Changes of training modes for talents in information age

In industrial age, "standard parts production" and "assembly line" are the basic form of school training. At the same time, in the same space, different learners learn the same content at the same rate with the same standard inspection and evaluation. This mode saves the education resources, but can hardly meet learners' individual needs. In

information era, new type of hybrid teaching combines classroom learning and network education. Students feel free to learn in personal and different ways. This mode of learning provides more choices for students and improves students' creativity. For example, "flipped classroom" changes the way of learning. Students can learn targeted knowl-

edge and information before class. During the class, they just need to show what they have learnt by taking part in various class activities designed by the teacher to test the learning effect. In this way, teaching efficiency is greatly improved. Autonomous learning before class is the basis of the mode of flipped classroom teaching.

Those new teaching models provide students with more opportunities to learn by themselves under the guidance of teachers. Only the students themselves know their own interests. They are free to choose the ways to learn, and the resources to absorb. Teachers are only scaffolding students' learning. Teachers' roles are changed, for they are not the center of teaching. They become supporters, guides, supervisors, and assessors. Learning is truly student-centered and more individualized. The ideal teaching mode—"Teaching students in accordance with their aptitude" is realized.

From the above analysis we can see learner autonomy is the inherent characteristic of student-centered education in infor-

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# Methods and Challenges of Motivating MOOC Learners

## —An Analysis of MOOC Discussion Forum Posts

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**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to describe the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion. A comparison of the same course run in Xuetangx. com and edX. org is made, indicating the cultural differences as well as the forum teacher assistants' strategies to manage posts in Chinese and in English. An empirical account of how students actually communicate in the discussion forum, as part of assignments graded or as free space for questions and answers are distinguished. The findings of the analysis of MOOC discussion forum posts indicates that the learning community in which the Chinese learners are in tend to be more dynamic while learners in multi-cultural learning communities have diverse expectations of a MOOC and their use of discussion tend to be more superficial. Additionally, the differences in learning strategies as well as attention to language proficiency enhance communication. With more learners in both platforms, we have a long way to go to keep motivating learners to participate in MOOC discussion both in XuetangX and in edX platform.

**Keywords:** Communication, EdX, Online discussion, XuetangX

## 1. Introduction

Online learning, an important trend in education field, is regarded as a useful and significant way contributing a lot to the knowledge acquisition of students in and out of class to improve their learning efficiency<sup>[1-10]</sup>. In this case, as the latest online learning initiative that gains widespread popularity among many universities in the world, the MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) swept the whole education field

since 2012—the Year of the MOOC. It is the representative of open access, global, free, video-based instructional content, problem sets and forums released through an online platform to high volume of participants aiming to take a course or to be educated<sup>[11][12]</sup>. Among the numerous MOOC platforms, XuetangX platform and edX platform are two important MOOC providers at home and abroad respectively.

To ensure students' involvement and interaction as traditional face-to-face learning with synchronous communication, online discussion forum(ODF) is developed to provide the same function. In the online discussion forum, learners participate in the discussion with teachers and peers through posts flexibly when they are learning the course. In order to encourage and motivate learners to get more involved in online discussion, the teacher and the TAs(teacher assistants) always rack their brains for that it's of great difficulty to ensure the high participation and quality engagement in such a virtual discussion forum online. Therefore, the study of ODF has been a hot research topic

since the popularization of the MOOC, such as ODF's influences on deep learning, ways to promote e-learning through ODF, different roles of teachers and students in ODF, methods to achieve better peer interaction in ODF, factors influencing the effectiveness of ODF and ways to improve online participation. However, little research has been done on the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion through the way of comparing the same course in different platforms.

In the case of the same course—*Conversational English Skills* (生活英语听说) MOOC—running in Xuetangx. com and edX. org, this paper aims to study the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in MOOC online discussion, indicating the cultural differences as well as the forum teacher assistants' strategies to manage posts in Chinese and in English. An empirical account based on textual analysis of how students actually communicate in the discussion forum, as part of assignments graded or as free space for questions and answers, are distinguished<sup>[13]</sup>.

## 2. Literature review

As the MOOC comes to be of high popularity, online discussion forum(ODF) is developed to provide the function of ensuring students' involvement and interaction as traditional face-to-face learning with synchronous communication. In the ODF, learners participate in the discussion with teachers and peers through posts flexibly when they

are learning the course. In order to encourage and motivate learners to get more involved in online discussion, the teacher and the TAs always rack their brains for that it's of great difficulty to ensure the high participation and quality engagement in such a virtual discussion forum online. Therefore, the study of ODF has been a hot research

topic since the popularization of the MOOC.

Prister and Prister (1969) argued that online discussion had huge potential to provide semiotic mediation to support students' learning<sup>[14]</sup>. A better understanding of how online discussion forums are structured and how language in this environment functions is needed to provide a firm basis for teachers and students to make good use of the opportunities for semiotic mediation offered by online forums. With the 12-week study involved 26 student teachers in five reflection groups, Redmon and Burger (2004) described the content and character of WebCT facilitated group reflection as a medium for enabling and encouraging reflection and interaction among student teachers, suggesting that student teachers interact reflectively within this context and the willingness of student teachers to practice reflective habits might be adversely influenced by increased stress and workload<sup>[15]</sup>. Based on the analysis of interactions between and among students using qualitative and quantitative transcript content analyses, Cox and Cox (2007) examined discussion board transcripts from three graduate education courses through the amount of interaction, exchanges of personal and professional experiences and requests for specific information, proposing that asynchronous threaded discussions can be used to create a collaborative learning environment as well as interpersonal and group dynamics<sup>[16]</sup>.

Warren (2008) examined the role of learning management systems in real property education, emphasizing the use of asynchronous discussion boards and indicating

that, as a tool of administration, discussion board is of great significance in motivating postgraduate real estate student's engagement with their peers to achieve deep learning among them<sup>[17]</sup>. On the basis of online survey, semi-structured interview methodology and analysis of 196 students who attended computers systems and structures course of online certificate program using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, content analysis method, Yuksekturk (2010) analyzed the factors that affect student participation in discussion forum under the two main purposes of examining the relationship between the students' individual demographics and categories of students' participation level, inactive, moderate, and active in discussion forum of an online course and the students' views about reasons for low level of interaction in discussion forum, indicating that three student characteristics, achievement, gender and weekly hours of Internet use, showed a significant relationship with students' participation level in discussion forum of the online course<sup>[18]</sup>. And some of the critical issues should be taken into account in designing online discussion, such as, students' workload and responsibilities, progress of interaction over the Internet taking more time, planned and structured instructional activities in discussion forum.

Cheng, Paré, Collimore and Joordens (2011) evaluated the effectiveness of voluntary discussion forums in a higher education setting, examining intrinsic forum participation and investigating its relation to course performance across two experiments<sup>[19]</sup>. It

indicated that that students who participated in the forum tended to have better performance in the course, and furthermore that participating in the discussion forum, particularly reading posts on the forum, slightly improved exam performance. Compared with the success of the REAP project, Clarke (2011) attempted to address problems of attrition and non-engagement amongst first year law students by introducing online small group activities based around discussion forums into the level 4(first year) Legal Method course, suggesting that large, funded projects play a role in pushing forward improvements in learning and teaching, but that caution has to be observed in seeking to transplant ideas and findings from one learning context to another<sup>[20]</sup>. Blackmon (2012) provided some insight into the themes that appear in literature on discussion boards and chats in online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses based on the investigation of some of the student outcomes of discussion board/chat use in online learning, that is, relational capital influenced students' experiences in courses and their decision to post or not, students missed the social cues, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc., interaction increased student achievement, time constraints had an effect on whether students chose to respond to discussion posts, and instructor presence influenced how students decided to post<sup>[21]</sup>.

Huang and Hung (2013) explored English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learner's perception of participating in a video-based online discussion forum as a way to improve their English, indicating that EFL learners

regarded the v-forum discussion as a highly promising activity that could function to strengthen the mutual scaffolding and bonding among peers, increase the opportunity for English writing and oral practices, and cultivate public speaking skills<sup>[22]</sup>. However, they cautioned that the frustration and anxiety associated with the repetitive videotapings for this activity might adversely affect the motivation to participate. Xia, Fielder and Siragusa (2013) documented the initial phase of a research project to improve peer interaction in a discussion forum for a Spatial Sciences unit at Curtin University, proposing that the initiatives of offering incentives to participate in the discussion forum and creating a positive community environment appear to have evidently improved the participation level, overcoming the challenges such as lack of contact with peers, limited sense of belonging to the learning community, and frustration about receiving delayed feedback to postings<sup>[23]</sup>. Baxter and Haycock (2014) proposed an ideographic case study focusing on a course forum linked to a single Level 2 undergraduate module and open to over 1,000 students in a large distance learning university<sup>[24]</sup>. They found that, although the large forum environment facilitates a certain degree of academic integration and identity, it also presents barriers with negative effects on student motivation and online identity.

As students can communicate and share knowledge with peers in online discussion forum for learning, it facilitates the interaction among them. However, there are several factors that make a difference in making op-

timum use of ODF, such as computer self-efficacy, perceptions of external control, computer anxiety and computer playfulness. Based on a survey research design and an online questionnaire for 121 Library and Information Science ( LIS ) postgraduate students, Adetimirin ( 2015 ) proposed and empirically tested a conceptual model based on TAM 3 ( Technology Acceptance Model 3 ), demonstrating that computer self-efficacy, perceptions of external control, computer anxiety and computer playfulness have significant influence on the use of ODF, which should be encouraged for learning in post-graduate education<sup>[25]</sup>. Hew ( 2015 ) reported three cases that examined students' preference for peer or instructor facilitation of online discussion forums and their respective reasons, suggesting that despite the reported benefits of peer facilitators in the literature, most students irrespective of student samples still preferred an instructor to peer facilitation in online discussion<sup>[26]</sup>. Based on the cross-comparison of the three cases, it is revealed that, on the one hand, instructor facilitation is preferred to prevent the discussion from going off track, to resolve conflicts in the discussion, to provide information particularly when the topic of discussion is new, and to motivate the discussion when students' participation wanes; on the other hand, when the participants desire greater freedom in voicing their own views, greater ownership in determining the direction of the discussion, and actual hands-on-facilitation-experience, peer facilitation is

preferred. Yang, Wei and Zhang ( 2015 ) attempted to explore a collaborative learning model of discussion forum in MOOC edX, finding that based on discussion forum as its learning community, with students as the major role of course activities, teachers as the guide and supervisor, the model adopts flexible and efficient teaching methods, which contribute to effective learning in the interaction, increases the depth of EFL learning in social, cognitive and teaching aspects, and shows the unique advantages over traditional teaching model<sup>[27]</sup>. Luhrs and McAnally-Salas ( 2016 ) described the way of using Social Network Analysis to design a collaboration index ( CI )<sup>[28]</sup>. The study was conducted in a heterogeneous context of hybrid and online courses in a virtual classroom system in higher education, showing that the collaboration index effectively identified levels of collaboration in asynchronous discussion forums.

In a nutshell, the previous studies of ODF shed light on ODF's influences on deep learning, ways to promote e-learning through ODF, different roles of teachers and students in ODF, methods to achieve better peer interaction in ODF, factors influencing the effectiveness of ODF and ways to improve online participation. Little research has been done on the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion through the way of comparing the same course in different platforms at home and abroad.

### 3. Methodology

To figure out the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion, a comparison of the same course run in Xuetangx. com and edX. org is made, indicating the cultural differences as well as the forum teacher assistants' strategies to manage posts in Chinese and in English. Based on the methodology of textual analysis, an empirical account of how students actually communicate in the discussion forum, as part of assignments graded or as free space for questions and answers, are distinguished.

According to McKee, when textual analysis is performed on a text, an educated guess is made at some of the most likely interpretations that might be made of that text<sup>[13]</sup>. In other words, textual analysis is a way of gathering and analyzing information in academic research, mainly including 9 steps: 1) Choose topic of interest. 2) If necessary, focus question to become more specific. 3) List the texts which are relevant to the

question from one's own experience. 4) Find more texts by doing research both academic and popular. 5) Gather the texts. 6) Watch as many examples of each program as one can and notice how particular textual elements work in each one. 7) Watch other programs in the same genre to see how they work; 8) Get as much sense as one can of the wider "semiosphere" as one can to get some sense of how these texts might fit into the wider context; 9) With this context in mind, return to the texts and attempt to interpret likely interpretations of them.

In reference to the 9 steps of textual analysis, the posts both in Chinese and English of the same course—*Conversational English Skills* MOOC—in XuetangX and edX platform are selected and analyzed to find out how students actually communicate in the discussion forum to figure out the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion.

### 4. Discussion and analysis

*Conversational English Skills* MOOC is an English online course of oral communication of 8 different units with topics close to our daily life. It is now running in XuetangX for the 7th time and in edX for the 3rd time, with the learner enrollment adding up to over 410,000 from 197 countries so far. The course contains both linguistic compe-

tence and cultural communication of English, concerning not only vocabularies, useful expressions, sentence structures, but also western cultures and societies. Learners at home and abroad can flexibly decide when and where to learn. The online learning consists of two steps: The first is watching course videos, reading Wiki material and

supplementary information, which can be uploaded by both teachers and students, enabling the learning community to share information and resources generated dynamically; the second is collaborative learning in the discussion forum, that is, opinions exchanging about the same topic, experience sharing and collaborative knowledge construction. In the discussion forum on XuetangX and edX platform, teachers and teaching assistants arrange and guide learner's discussion posts and make comments on the contents, classifying the contents according to topics to check out how discussion goes on and participating in the discussion when needed.

To make a comparison, in reference to the ODF of this course in other times, on the one hand, we choose *Conversational English Skills* opened in XuetangX for the fourth time from September 2015 with 41,362 learners, where discussion is regarded as part of assignments graded; on the other hand, we choose the same course opened in edX for the second time at the same month with 68,755 learners from 196 countries in

the world where discussion is regarded as free space for questions and answers. With the collection and comparison of the discussion posts, the discussion topics are divided mainly into 3 types: 1) discussion required by teacher for each unit with questions related to the topic given; 2) spontaneous course content discussion initiated by learners; 3) discussions consulting technical problems. To be more specific, the types of discussion consist of 1) topic discussion, the most common type by throwing out a discussion topic; 2) question discussion, asking questions related to English study strategy or technical problems about platform operations; and 3) answer discussion, the response following a topic discussion and question discussion, reflecting students' initiatives of community involvement.

To ensure the efficiency of comparison, we choose the posts of the discussion required by teacher for each unit with questions related to the topic given for the 8 units for basic analysis. The discussion questions are as follows (Tab. 1):

**Tab. 1 Discussion Questions for Conversational English Skills MOOC**

Unit	Topic	Discussion questions
1	You Say, I Say	1) How do you greet an old friend? 2) How to make a good first impression?
2	The People in Your Life	1) Think of three good friends. How would you describe them? 2) Is it possible to be equally close to every of your friends? 3) How often do you go out with your friends? 4) Can you say no to a friend's invitation to his party? 5) Tell us about your family.
3	Eating in and Eating out	1) Can you describe your favorite food? 2) What are the typical food you and your family like?
4	Why Do You Want to Learn English?	1) Why do you take this MOOC? 2) What do you know about the U. K. ?
5	Good Times and Bad Times	1) Do you have any plans for your summer holiday? 2) Which of the following holidays do you like best? Explain why. a) The Spring Festival. b) Dragon Boat Festival. c) Mid-Autumn Day.
6	What Are Your Hobbies?	1) What are your hobbies? 2) Kirk believes that "hobbies should be always your own choice". Do you think so?
7	Feelings	1) How do you usually deal with your own bad feelings? 2) Are there any activities that make you feel less stressed?
8	Staying Healthy	1) How do you usually stay physically healthy? 2) How do you maintain your mental health?

For example, in the case of discussion for Unit 3, the example answers in XuetangX are as follows:

1) Can you describe your favorite food?

*My favorite food is dumpling. Dumpling is a traditional Chinese food and taste very delicious. It is made of flour and have different stuffings in it. People from different areas will prefer to different kinds of taste of dumplings. For example, people from the south areas may like the light taste better while the northern people would prefer to the heavy taste.*

2) What are the typical food you and your family like?

*My family is at the north and south of the transition zone. For this reason, my family like to eat rice and the food made of flour as well. Last but not least, it is because my hometown is near to the lake that all my family members like eat fish.*

And following this there are several comments from peers, such as *I also like dumplings and fish, I like dumplings, good.* Compared with the discussion in edX, things are of great differences.

In Unit 3, we have learnt food cultures, customs and eating habits across countries. It's great that some of us have vividly described the typical foods in their country.

1) Which country's food do you like most?

2) What special foods do you eat on holidays?

3) What do you think of "we are what we eat"?

*Hello, in Colombia, especially in Medellin, is famous the "bandeja paisa", this have a lot ingredients: rice, beans, fried pork, egg, slice of ripe, ground beef, is very delicious but also very heavy for digestion.*

*Look at the photo. (a vivid photo here)*

*On "we are what we eat"? I think so is true, our body is the result of how we eat and of foods we eat, for this reason our food must be balanced, healthy and in small quantities to make a good digestion.*

And following this there are several comments from peers, such as

*Hi! I'm Cristina from Spain. I have a friend from Medellin who ever cooks me tasty recipes from Colombia.*

*Hi! Cristina, hello cristina, i loved that you like our food.*

*Hi CRistine, this plate remember Honduras. We have a similar food, here We love this in breakfast or dinner.*

Based on these observation and analysis, the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in online discussion of *Conversational English Skills* are concluded. Firstly, to encourage the learners to be more active in the ODF of XuetangX or edX, the immediate answer or

feedback is of great significance, which is the key to online interaction for asynchronous communication. To overcome this challenge, the teacher selected the previous excellent learners as the community teacher assistants to interact actively in the ODF. Besides, they set up a WeChat platform called "THU 生活英语慕课" to get more learners or potential learners involved in online discussion or course learning. Secondly, in XuetangX, to engage the Chinese learners in the discussion, the teacher assistants usually provide some off-line activities with awards for excellent learners, which is a pretty good way to narrow the distance between the teacher and the learners. Thirdly, to promote the participation in ODF in edX platform, the teacher assistants in edX are always ready to answer the questions in an enthusiastic way to arouse their interests. As the foreign learners in the edX platform, to some extent, have diverse expectations for a MOOC, their use of discussion tend to be more superficial, for example, more for chatting or making friends than learning. Fourthly, compared with the foreign learners in edX, the Chinese learners tend to pay more attention to language proficiency and learning strategies, which obviously enhance the interaction and communication in the ODF. Fifthly, through the comparison of the course opened in XuetangX for several times, it is evident that making the discussion as an assignment to be graded is an effective way to get more learners involved in the discussion.

To conclude, the cultural differences as well as the forum teacher assistants' strate-

gies to manage posts in Chinese and in English are clearly shown. On the one hand, the ODF in which the Chinese learners are in have a tendency of being well-disciplined, in which the answers are always posted in good order closely related to the question, while the ODF in which the foreign learners are in has a tendency of free style, in which the answers are always in various patterns and easily changed the topic. On the other hand, the forum teacher assistants in XuetangX mainly manage the posts by answering the questions and making announcements of requirements and good news, among which sharing learning methods and materials is of great importance, while to get used to the

multi-cultural background for discussion, the forum teacher assistants in edX mainly manage the posts by answering the questions and throwing out topics related to music or daily life, in which the sharing of learning resources is rare. What's more, the learning community in which the Chinese learners are in tends to be more dynamic while learners in multi-cultural learning communities have diverse expectations of a MOOC and their use of discussion tends to be more superficial, which is clearly shown by the comparison of the number of posts. Additionally, the differences in learning strategies as well as attention to language proficiency enhance communication.

## 5. Conclusion

Online learning is a useful and significant way contributing a lot to the knowledge acquisition of students in and out of class to improve their learning efficiency. As the latest online learning initiative that gains widespread popularity among many universities in the world, the MOOC comes to be of high popularity. In the meanwhile, online discussion forum(ODF) is developed to provide the function of ensuring students' involvement and interaction as traditional face-to-face learning with synchronous communication. In the ODF, learners participate in the discussion with teachers and peers through posts flexibly when they are learning the course. In order to encourage and motivate learners to get more involved in online discussion, the teacher and the TAs(teacher assistants) always rack their brains for that it's

of great difficulty to ensure the high participation and quality engagement in such a virtual discussion forum online.

In the case of the same course—*Conversational English Skills*—running in Xuetangx. com and edX. org, this paper described the methods and challenges of motivating learners to get more involved in MOOC online discussion, indicating the cultural differences as well as the forum teacher assistants' strategies to manage posts in Chinese and in English. It distinguished an empirical account based on textual analysis of how students actually communicate in the discussion forum, as part of assignments graded or as free space for questions and answers, indicating that the learning community in which the Chinese learners are in tends to be more dynamic while learners in multi-

cultural learning communities have diverse expectations of a MOOC and their use of discussion tends to be more superficial. Additionally, the differences in learning strategies as well as attention to language proficiency enhance communication. Faced with the challenge of low participation in the ODF, there are 5 methods described: giving immediate answer or feedback, for example, setting up a WeChat platform; providing off-line activities with awards for excellent learners; answering the questions in an enthusiastic way to arouse their interests; paying more attention to language proficiency and learning strategies, which obviously enhance the interaction and communication in the ODF; making the discussion as an assignment to be graded.

Although this study explored the methods and challenges of motivating MOOC learners through the way of comparing the same course in different platforms, there are some limitations to be improved. For example, the methodology used in this study is merely textual analysis, which can be very subjective during the operation. And questionnaires and interviews can be added to make some improvements. With more learners in both platforms, we have a long way to go to keep motivating learners to participate in MOOC discussion both in XuetangX and edX platform.

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# Personalizing Independent Learning: An Applied Study on Military English Course Based on the Flipped Classroom

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**Abstract:** The flipped classroom is currently a buzzword in higher education around the world. This method is more student-centered and learning-centered than traditional teaching; it personalizes students' learning and facilitates their understanding, especially when they do autonomous learning with micro classes during their off-class time. This paper provides the findings and conclusions of a case study about flipped classroom practice of a military English course, an ESP course. The study shows the students prefer blended learning to fully online learning or the traditional approach and they are more engaged in their independent learning period. Moreover, it reports project-based learning and problem-based learning can facilitate students' autonomous learning and realize pedagogical purposes. It is argued that the flipped classroom approach encourages ESP classroom learning, as well as ESP independent learning.

**Keywords:** Autonomous learning, ESP, Flipped classroom, Independent learning

## 1. Introduction

Educating 21st century learners is a huge challenge for most school teachers. The new generation of learners is quite different from what we have experienced both as students and as teachers in the last century. They can easily get access to numerous

advanced technologies and are more likely to be attracted by new gadgets. Moreover, what they need to learn is more complex than before. However, the core of education remains all the same, that is, to facilitate learning and help students to be independent learners in

their life time. Learning and lifelong learning should always be placed in the first place. Teaching only serves as the instrument for helping students to learn. Therefore, classroom instruction should be designed to encourage and help students to motivate their autonomous learning. In this sense, traditional classroom cannot satisfy the needs for today's learners any more.

Autonomy, as well as autonomy related concepts and practices, has often been discussed by lots of scholars (Benson, 2007a, 2010, 2011; Holec, 1981; Huang, 2006a, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2013; Murray, Gao & Lamb, 2011) around the world [1-10]. "Benson (2011) proposes that autonomy can be best defined as a capacity to control one's own learning." (Huang, 2013)[9] Building on the

definition of autonomy, it is clear that to develop students' autonomous learning is to improve their capacity to control their learning, that is, what they learn and how they learn should be determined by their own needs and levels. Their independent learning requires to be personalized and suit for individual learner. However, the traditional teacher-centered lecture-type classroom would not satisfy this need and lacks of free spaces for students to develop. To address this problem, this article tries to explore the method of flipped classroom to help students build this kind of capacity from the instruction side of school education, using an ESP course (Military English) as an example to develop classroom instruction design.

## 2. Theoretical background

The flipped classroom actually is not a new phenomenon. As early as 1980s, Harvard scholar Eric Mazur developed peer instruction and made similar experiments. But the flipped classroom becomes a buzzword around the world after Jon Bergmann and Aaron Sams started using this method in 2007 and Salman Khan built Khan Academy and made a speech at TED in 2011. But it is just a couple of years that it has been widely welcomed and practiced in China, most of which has been experimenting in primary schools or high schools [11].

Wikipedia defines the flipped classroom as "an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional con-

tent, often online, outside of the classroom. It moves activities, including those that may have traditionally been considered homework, into the classroom. In a flipped classroom, students watch online lectures, collaborate in online discussions, or carry out research at home and engage in concepts in the classroom with the guidance of a mentor. [12]" Bishop & Verleger (2013) regard the flipped classroom as "an educational technique that consists of two parts: interactive group learning activities inside the classroom, and direct computer-based individual instruction outside the classroom. [13]" But the flipped classroom does not just change learning location. It involves both learning process and pedagogical process.

Flipping our classrooms upside down

can obviously facilitate students' independent learning and they need to be more responsible for their own learning. It also means more personalized instructor guidance. The roles of instructors and students are completely changed. Students have more autonomy to take charge of their own study. They can decide their own learning pace and explore the field they really interest in. If they don't understand some point of the lecture, they can pause and replay the lecture video without any worries and pressure. Besides, with their phones and iPads, they can easily get contact with their teachers via the Internet. Therefore, learning happens at the level of an individual student, instead of a whole class as one level. Naturally teaching

techniques should be changed according to learners' different needs and learning capacities. It is a complete shift from a traditional teacher-centered classroom to a student-centered learning environment. What instructors provide is not just the knowledge taught in the classroom, but the learning environment to facilitate independent learning, including the time before, in and also after the actual class. Tab. 1 depicts the comparison between the traditional classroom and the flipped classroom.

And classroom teaching will also promote students' autonomous learning during their off-class time. Fig. 1 depicts the relationship of teaching and learning.

Tab. 1 Comparison between the traditional classroom and the flipped classroom

	Traditional Classroom	Flipped Classroom
Teaching Process	Preview before class + instruct in class + review after class	Instruct before class + solve problems in class + explore after class
Teacher	Knowledge deliverer	Learning facilitator
Student	Passive acceptor	Active explorer
Teaching Content	Knowledge instruction	Problem investigation
Teaching Technique	Teacher-centered instruction	Personalized instructor guidance
Teaching Objective	To understand	To apply

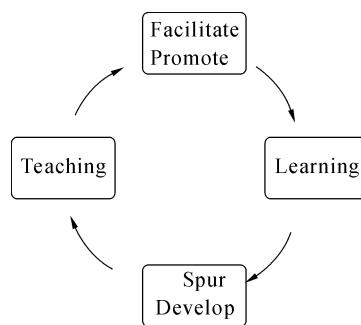


Fig. 1 The relationship of teaching and learning

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research context

Based on the theory of the flipped classroom, this article develops an instruction design of an ESP course—military English as an example. This inquiry examines how well students learn under different learning environment and teaching techniques. This study was conducted in Military Economics Academy in China. About 60 undergraduates were chosen to undertake this lesson under the model of college English differentiating instruction. They were divided into two classes according to their English levels. We chose *Campaign—English for the Military 2* published by Macmillan as the teaching material.

### 3.2 Participants

The participants were 60 second-year college English learners in this academy. Most of them had learned English for 8 to 9 years. Their age ranged from 18 to 23 and their English levels are similar. But they came from different provinces of China and had different professional background. Some of them had already been a solder for a couple of years while others came to this academy by passing the National College Entrance Examination. Therefore, some students had substantial career experiences and professional knowledge while others may know little.

### 3.3 Feedback collection

After the class, the teacher would ask the students to take a quick quiz on what they have learned and they were required to hand in their reflections on the Internet. After we checked the test papers and collected and read the reflections, we chose 10 students to be interviewed. Five questions were designed to communicate with them about what they had gained and their feelings about the learning experiences of the flipped classroom. During the interview, they recalled their learning experiences in the experiment. The study shows the students prefer a blended learning to a fully online learning approach or traditional approach and are more engaged in their independent learning period than before.

### 3.4 Teaching design

According to the flipped classroom theory, this research divides the whole teaching process into three stages: preclass stage, in-class stage and after-class stage. Each stage is equally important for both students and teachers.

**Preclass stage:** In the traditional classroom, students would not do much except reading the text. But now, students are involved a lot at this stage in the flipped classroom. First, teachers should do a research on the teaching content and carefully select the knowledge points to deliver to students. Then teachers would write the teaching de-

sign of this lesson, analyze the problems students would meet and develop activities and tasks for students to do in the classroom and for their autonomous learning. Next, teachers would either make instructive videos and micro lectures or write documents and PPT and these learning materials would be sent to students for their independent learning. Taking Unit 1 as an example, teachers would make a micro lesson about basic vocabulary of this unit, including military bases, training, army ranks, as well as background information. And students would be required to do some research on the topic of this unit—British Parachute Regiment. They would present what they have found during the real instruction time. In the meantime, students and teachers would keep in contact with each other via social media instruments, such as QQ, WeChat, and so on. Fig. 2 depicts the process of preclass stage.

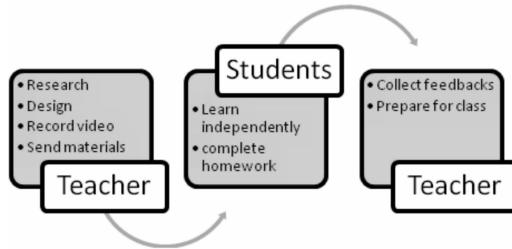


Fig. 2 Preclass process

In-class stage: Teachers first check students' learning in a few minutes, then give them tasks to finish based on their feedbacks. In this period, teachers and students would exchange their ideas interactively and especially focus on the problems students meeting during their independent learning period. The teaching techniques

used here would be more student-centered and personalized. Teachers can divide the whole class into several groups and give each group some personalized guidance while they are in discussion. Problem-based instruction and task-based instruction are preferred here. Teachers would give evaluation and feedback to students in time. As in this unit, teachers would first hand out a quick quiz about the vocabulary of this unit and ask them to present what they have found about British Parachute Regiment and share with other students. They may use PPT or other instruments. Then teachers would divide them into six groups to share their own career experiences with their peers, using the words they have learned during the independent learning period. Some students would present their ideas and teachers should give feedbacks immediately.

After-class stage: In traditional classroom, students would do their homework independently and teachers would check the homework and evaluate it. Homework is mainly about what they have learned. But in the new model, students can broaden their research and learn independently or collaboratively due to the usage of new technologies. They would find more about Falklands / Malvinas besides Part Charlie in the textbook. They would also work in pairs and tell their partner about a weapon or piece of equipment they know well. With the Internet and Wi-Fi, they are encouraged to find more information by themselves.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Active personalized learning

Most learning happens during our school education. So if educators want to facilitate and encourage students' independent learning, a shift must be made from the focus on teaching to learning. Knowledge internalization happens only when learners try to understand knowledge actively. Without the internal driving, learning cannot be efficient no matter how many hours you spend. Moreover, every learner has different needs and learning habits. However, traditional instruction only treats the whole class of students as one and overlooks the diversity of teaching targets. The flipped classroom can transform this situation. Problem-focused class time becomes more meaningful and efficient. Most importantly, learning is more authentic and personalized when this teaching technique is taken. Students can choose their own learning pace and replay the recorded lectures whenever it is necessary. They also have more opportunities to communicate with teachers about their own problems and interests. Therefore, adopting the method of the flipped classroom can also promote and improve students' independent learning capacity and process.

### 4.2 Improved autonomous learning strategies

The information that was collected from the students shows that they can learn more and get most of their information before the

class, which made them feel more confident to participate in the real classroom activities. With the solid background knowledge at the preclass stage, they developed their autonomous learning strategies as well as their knowledge. They subconsciously improved their learning capacities while they tried to finish the assigned learning materials. In most cases, to fulfill the learning tasks, students will try their best to find the solutions to what they are interested. They also have a tendency to explore the Internet or some social media platforms to seek out different explanations or expanded discussions of the topic, which surely benefits their learning capacity.

### 4.3 On-going enhancements

This research is just an experiment on the flipped classroom applied in an ESP course. There still exist a lot of enhancements in the future. The instructors of the flipped classroom would face the challenge of integrating new technologies and grasping a large range of knowledge. The new teaching technique requires instructors to put more time and energy to explore the contents to assure expert guidance during the class time. Another challenge for teachers is how to guarantee students' learning time and learning quality during their independent learning periods. For students, they should change some of their learning habits and ideas towards learning and make sure their own quality time with autonomous learning.

## 5. Conclusion

In this paper, we reported a study that has explored practice of the flipped classroom in an ESP course. This method is more student-centered and learning-centered than traditional classroom, and it personalizes students' learning and facilitates their understanding, especially when they do autonomous learning with micro classes during their off-class time. The study shows students prefer blended learning to fully online learning or the traditional approach and they are more engaged in their independent learning period. Moreover, it reports project-based learning and problem-based learning can facilitate students' autonomous learning and realize pedagogical purposes. It is argued that the flipped classroom encourages ESP classroom learning, as well as ESP independent learning.

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# Relations between Autonomy and Flipped Classroom Teaching<sup>①</sup>

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**Abstract:** The article studies the relations between Autonomy and Flipped Classroom Teaching(FCT). By using questionnaire and experimental teaching in College English, the author finds that Autonomy and FCT are closely related to each other. Autonomy is the foundation of FCT. Without certain autonomy in students and teachers, students couldn't have performed well under FCT and FCT couldn't have achieved its desired teaching effects; while FCT promotes development of different patterns and scales of Autonomy. FCT promotes learner autonomy to develop from low levels to high levels, from self-directed autonomy to socialized autonomy and from task-specific autonomy to consciously seeking improvement of autonomy including students' conscious strategy learning and teachers' strategy training as well as self-directed profession development.

Under FCT, teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are highly correlated. Before class, teacher's issuing of tasks activates learners' task-specific autonomy in students. While preparing the tasks, if students interact with other top students (which is often encouraged), these students need to demonstrate socialized autonomy. While performing group works in classroom session, the independent exploration of questions and collaboration with group members all call for autonomy of different scales. Hence, to make FCT successful and effective, learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are a must and principles and approaches to help develop autonomy in these parties should be focused.

**Keywords:** Autonomy, FCT, Relations

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## 1. Introduction

Language learning is mostly motivated by examination-oriented or individual development-oriented purposes in China. (Gao Xuesong (Andy), 2006). With these “tool discourses”, College English learning and teaching is not satisfying for the fact that students are too practical and lacking in interests in all-rounded development in English language thus fail to develop all-rounded language competence. Recent years, the Ministry of Education has issued new syllabus for college English teaching which highlights listening and speaking skills besides the traditional aims like reading, writing and translation. (Liu Guiqin, 2012) Therefore, universities and colleges around the nation all rise to experiment on new approaches of College English teachings, as is the background of the College English FCT reform in WUST(Wuhan University of Science and Technology)with the aims to motivate English learning and improve their all-rounded linguistic competence.

## 2. Methods

Prior to large scale of implementation of FCT reform for College English Listening and Speaking Course(CELSC) in WUST, a teaching reform group has carried out FCT experimental teaching for one term among limited majors in grade 2013. All of the necessary elements of FCT model are included (elements mentioned by Bergmann J. &

Tremendous studies have demonstrated the importance of learner autonomy in language learning. Evidence from psychology, linguistics and education shows that, to promote language learning, certain amount of autonomy in learner should be developed in terms of beliefs, meta-cognition knowledge and skills (Marie-José Gremmo and Philip Riley, 1995; Phil Benson, 1997; Sara Cotterall, 1999; Anita L. Wenden, 1999; Barry J. Zimmerman, 2005). The College English FCT in WUST has turned out to be a success not only from some aspects of academic achievement, but also, as we posited, seemingly in demonstrating the development of types of autonomy in students. In this study, a questionnaire composed by the authors is used to collect data of opinions by students on the FCT model, based on which observations and analysis are made to demonstrate the potential relations between FCT and autonomy.

Sams A. ,2012), such as 1) particular online platform allowing students to do before-class activities including short-video watching, finishing online assignments and interacting with peers and teachers etc. ,2) in-class theme activities designed before class by reform group members and carried out in class with teachers' feedback coming

immediately thereafter, 3) assessment policies emphasizing process learning including mid-term tests, final tests, peer and daily assessments during the term etc. With certain successful results of the prior teaching experiments, especially academically, the FCT model was expanded to half of the freshmen enrolled to WUST in 2014 for their CELSC which lasts for four terms. A questionnaire used for this research was done in the third term with aim to find out students' opinions about the teaching model.

The questionnaire includes four individual profile items and ten question state-

ments. 281 students are chosen randomly as respondents with gender structure of 134 boys to 147 girls, major structure of 104 liberal arts students to 177 science and engineering students, and self-assessment of English proficiency classified into three levels including 32 students assessing their own English as good, 155 average and 94 bad. Students' responses were recorded using the following four-point scale: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (agree) and 4 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient was .84.

### 3. The results

We carry out factor analysis using principal component analysis with Varimax. As a result, two factors with Eigenvalues larger than 1 were extracted to explain 54.44% of the total variance (Tab. 1). We label the two factors learner belief and learning style respectively. Because the loadings of item 5 (Teacher organizes and monitors in-class ac-

tivities well) on the two factors are quite close (.49 on factor 1 versus .47 on factor 2), as indicates that on item 5 the two factors are highly related, thus we delete item 5 from the data and the following analysis is done based on the revised data with the factor loadings improved (Tab. 2).

Tab. 1 Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	
1	3.836	42.621	42.621	3.836	42.621	42.621	3.344
2	1.063	11.814	54.436	1.063	11.814	54.436	1.555
3	.757	8.414	62.849				
...	...	...	...				

Factor 1 learner belief

1. FCT is fresh and makes me positively involved in study. (.752) (Learning initia-

tive)

6. FCT makes me more interested in English learning. (.703) (Learning interest)

2. FCT before-class videos have proper length and explain language points clearly. (. 673)(Video satisfaction)

3. FCT in-class activities can practice my speaking and listening well. (. 639) (In-class activities learning effect)

9. FCT online platform creates more chances for me to communicate with peers and teachers. (. 697)(Communication)

7. I can easily take part in the group work and I like learning English this way.

.646)(Collaboration)

4. Teacher gives inspiring comments after FCT in-class activities. (. 603)(Effective feedback)

Factor 2 learning styles

8. FCT makes me spend more time in English learning. (. 889)(Learning time)

10. FCT makes me more competent in learning English in my own way. (. 684) (Independent learning competence)

**Tab. 2 Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component	
	1	2
1Learning initiative ↑	.752	.225
6Learning interest ↑	.703	.334
9Communication ↑	.697	.065
2Video satisfaction	.673	-.046
7Collaboration	.646	.124
3 In-class activities learning effect ↑	.639	.260
4Effective feedback	.603	.213
8Learning time ↑	-.004	.889
10 Independent learning competence ↑	.394	.684

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 3 iterations.

Factor 1 includes 7 items which reflect the students' belief (attitudes) toward FCT, of which loadings are all above .60. Items 1 and 6 demonstrate that the students are generally motivated by FCT and are happy to study this way. Items 2, 3, 4, 9 and 7 demonstrate the students' positive attitude toward specific activity in FCT. Factor 2 includes two items which reflect changes in the students' learning styles. Item 8 demon-

strates the fact that the students spend more time in English learning while item 10 demonstrates the styles by which the students learn English, which is mainly autonomous or self-directed. We may presume here that the students begin to explore learning themselves with self-directed aims and attempts. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient for factor 1 is .82, indicating high reliability of internal consistency, and for factor 2, .55

which is relatively low indicating caution for interpreting the results.

## 4. Discussions

The primary aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the students enrolled in FCT CELSC which aims for the development of linguistic competence. As the data analysis demonstrates, the students' experience was characterized by autonomy awakening involving both learner belief and learning styles. We argue that the FCT created a pedagogical environment conducive to autonomy growth. In this section of the paper we examine the feature of the FCT, which the data suggest was instrumental in fostering the development of autonomy.

### 4.1 Learner belief of autonomy is developed in FCT

High Factor Loadings on items 2,3,4,9 and 7 demonstrate the students' general acceptance in mind(learner belief)of the FCT model and its relative activities which require the students to initially take the responsibility of learning themselves, which is the core element of autonomy. As is presumed in FCT, video watching renders students fun and the freedom of choice of time and place to learn specific task before class. Online platform communication renders students chances to remove doubts socially before class so that they can focus on the most important points while involved in class activities(socialized autonomy). In-class group work provides forum for students to negotiate meanings and opportunities to exchange with peers;and teachers' comments help deepen and revise individual understandings. The means of realization of all the above purposes lie in students' au-

tonomy to some degree. Therefore, high loadings on these items can be a proof that the students' positive belief of autonomy has developed to some extent,under FCT. Items 1 and 6 are direct evidence of the students' high motivation in English learning provoked by FCT, which is such important content of autonomy.

### 4.2 Autonomous learning strategy is developed in FCT

Due to the relatively low Cronbach's  $\alpha$  in factor 2,we infer conservatively that the students develop certain learning strategies by themselves in English learning. In FCT, the theoretical learning time, comparing with traditional classroom, is relatively the same,only with the order of learning activities flipped. One sound reason for the significant increase in learning time, as item 8 demonstrates,is that students have stronger motive to learn English and they resort to increasing learning time to improve their English. (see examples by Gao Xuesong (Andy),2010). Item 10 is direct evidence of learning strategies since the students report confidence in autonomous competence. It's not difficult to speculate that they have commanded certain strategies in dealing with the academic difficulties. Anyway,just by investing more time in learning,which is surely an important element of learning strategy,we can still draw the above conclusion.

## 5. Conclusions

Although we have drawn the above conclusions on relations between FCT and autonomy, our arguments for the points need to be strengthened by further studies such as comparative experimental study of belief changes and strategy changes before and after FCT. And also, our questionnaires need to be improved in terms of quantity of items and quality of questions. Besides, the counting measurement should be changed to broader ranges (such as seven-point Likert measurement) so that more details about students' development can be reflected and more aspects out of our assumptions can be detected; what's more, we can also introduce new variables into the study, such as self-efficacy, gender or disciplines etc. so that our assumptions on the issue can be further verified.

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# Independent Learning and Language Cognition in English Poetry Teaching<sup>①</sup>

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**Abstract:** English poetry is beautiful in form and rich in meaning, whereas the teaching of English poetry is as difficult as poetry creation, which calls for not only enthusiasm and inspiration, but also attractive teaching method and supportive theoretical framework. With the framework of cognitive theory, this paper illustrates the teaching practice of one of Robert Frost's poems, in the course of which the cognitive pattern is embedded, and tries to explore the cognition-based teaching of English poetry such as the analysis of metaphor by the use of space mapping theory. It begins with the analysis of the poetic structure, which is ensued by students' active construction of the poem's meaning based on cognitive interpretation. Finally, students are cultivated to express their own opinions while thinking critically about the poem so as to improve their independent learning ability.

**Keywords:** English poetry teaching, Independent learning, Language cognition, Metaphor, Space mapping theory

## 1. Introduction

Independent learning is a heated topic for language teaching researchers for decades, no matter what it is defined, whether an innate ability or a formative process, a teaching practice or even a combination of

all the elements<sup>[1]</sup>. It has been generally accepted that the basic target of independent learning is to cultivate the learners' ability for independent learning, which is a dynamic

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and long-term self-developing process [2].

Cognitive poetics is a new way of thinking about literature, involving the application of cognitive linguistics and psychology to literary texts [3]. By presenting a delightful combination of theoretical enlightenment with a deep concern for practical analysis, it reflects the cognitive turn in literary studies in recent years [4].

This paper tries to pave a way for cognitive poetics applied to English poetry teaching. It helps to reveal the process of how the contextual meaning is produced and

the readers' mental mechanism along with it. It sheds some lights on literature teaching by finding an objective way to the interpretation and discovery of the textual meaning with feasible method easier for students' access in English literature teaching and learning, which actually involves four elements, including the students, the teacher, the literary text and the author, thus forming a multi-dimensional system of interactions instead of the previous one-way linear communication.

## 2. Metaphor and space mapping

Mapping is a concept used in mathematics, which refers to the corresponding relation between two elements in two different sets [5]. Applied in linguistics, mapping mainly refers to the identical relation and corresponding relation which is also called matching relation between different concepts.

Fauconnier describes people's association process as mapping from one mental space to another. In this light, poets avail themselves of various rules of association to guide readers into the conceptual spaces they have devised [6]. Therefore, establishing links between mental spaces is one of the essential artistic approaches, and space mapping plays an important role in the construction and comprehension of the poetic discourse.

Space mapping theory uses the functional mapping principle to analyze the process of association and cognitive inference. As a result, the semantic meaning becomes the overlapped concept of various mental spaces, which can be started and connected with each other once stimulated by the writer's glossematic signals. Why human beings can understand language? The reason is that human beings have the ability to transcend different mental spaces and to blend a variety of concepts in different mental spaces [7]. Oakley pointed out that most of our thinking and inference is a kind of cross space mapping of complicated information. As for mapping, it is the pursuit of the corresponding relation and matching relation between the explications and implications [8].

## 3. Independent learning of English poetry

Before class teaching, a micro lesson video about Robert Frost's "The Road Not

“Taken” has been available for all the students, together with other preview materials, such as the power point presentation, the flow diagram of the teaching design as well as the introduction to the poem and the poet. The core of the micro lesson video can be divided into three parts, that is, structure, symbol and theme.

### 3.1 Structure

“The Road Not Taken” has four stanzas, nine syllables in each line, and five lines each stanza, the traditional iambic tetrameter with the rhyme scheme: abaab. In the first stanza, the poet faces a choice between the “two roads diverging in a yellow wood” and he hesitates about which road he should take. After careful consideration, the poet chooses the less-traveled road in the following stanza. He knows clearly the fact that he has to give up something because he has decided to choose something else so that he feels distracted for the irreversibility of the other road [9]. The last stanza is about the poet’s retrospect several years later. It seems that he comes to realize that choices make life different when he looks back.

### 3.2 Symbol

Two input spaces can be found in this poem. One is the trip in a wood as the source domain while the other is the journey of life, which is the target domain as well as the major symbol in this poem. By the juxtaposition of several symbols, the two input spaces can help readers establish a new integrated space after a complicated cognitive process on the basis of their previous read-

ing experiences and life experiences [10].

In the cognitive framework of “trip in a wood”, there are several basic concepts: one traveler, two diverged roads, less traveled road and different destinations, which respectively are the mappings of everyone, choices in life, difficulties in life and different goals of life.

It seems that the poet is presenting two parallel groups of symbols, trying to establish two mental spaces partially interrelated, but in the last sentence of the final stanza Frost says “I took the one less traveled by, / And that has made all the difference”, which activates the two above-mentioned input spaces after skimming the irrelevant semantic features so as to form a new generic space onto which the groups of mapping concepts are projected [11]. Understanding meaning involves the construction of blended cognitive models that include some structure from multiple input models, as well as emergent structure that arises through the processes of blending [12].

Fauconnier & Turner (1998) have proposed that cross-space mappings in metaphor recruit the processes of blending. The meaning of metaphoric utterances can be represented in a conceptual integration network. In such a network, the source domain and the target domain each structures one input space. And the generic space represents abstract commonalities in the other spaces, and the blended space inherits structure from its inputs, and contains emergent structure of its own [13].

In “The Road Not Taken”, the new generic space can be understood by readers/

students which covers the major points as listed below:(1)Like the trip in a wood,our life also needs our choices. (2 ) Different choices make different lives. (3)We have to weigh on our minds carefully before we make a choice.

### 3.3 Theme

The discussion of structure and symbol facilitates readers/students to the theme of this poem. In the classroom teaching of this poem, it is crucial for the readers/students to reach the different meanings of the poem gradually from literally to figuratively. The literal meaning about the poet's“choice in a wood”, while the second bottom meaning needs some background information, such as the poet's life experience,his motive of creation and the schools and development of modern poetry.

In order to understand the intended figurative meaning, it is necessary to apply both background and contextual knowledge to identify target domain counterparts of elements and relations in the blended space<sup>[14]</sup>. As for the“Frost's choice: poetry creation”, readers/students have different interpretations. From the viewpoint of career choice, some students point out that “the road less traveled by”refers to Frost's decision to dedicate himself to poetry writing, which seems to be full of uncertainties and less secure compared with his previous life experience running a farm in New Hampshire, supplemented by teaching<sup>[15]</sup>. Other readers/students hold different opinions from literary background instead of the poet's personal experiences by considering

the mainstream of modern poetry in Robert Frost's time. Unlike his contemporaries in the early 20th century, Frost does not break up with the poetic tradition nor makes any experiment on form. Instead, choosing the old-fashioned way to be new,he has learned a lot from the tradition,especially the familiar conventions of nature poetry and of classical pastoral poetry, and makes the colloquial New England speech into a poetic expression. If Imagism and other poetic experimentation are the bright road,it is the road not taken by Frost who believes that the traditional poetic form can express and reflect modern man's living dilemma and intellectual crisis in modern society<sup>[16]</sup>.

### 3.4 Critical thinking and independent learning

The rapid development of the time calls for learners' long-life education concept and independent learning ability and the ideal of English poetry teaching is that learners play an active role in independent learning with a high and efficient command of extracurricular resources<sup>[17]</sup>.

Based on the discussion of the literal and figurative meanings of this poem, the students step from Frost's choice to readers' choice and start another heated discussion about their future career as well as their understanding of some details of this poem.

After close reading, several students notice the word“sigh”in the last stanza, a key word to convey the poet's attitude toward his choice,leads readers to two opposing interpretations. Some students regard it as a regret sigh, but this opinion is refuted

because everyone knows that it is no use regretting about the previous choice. Instead, many students designate that Frost's sign is a relief sign to show his thankfulness to his correct choice of poetry writing. However, some student has quite different voice that when Frost looks back he makes a helpless sign, because he cannot change his life and the time cannot go back, whether his choice is right or wrong, just like what is mentioned in Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*—"The past is the present, isn't it? It is the future, too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us"<sup>[18]</sup>. It is obvious that the present is determined by our choices in the past and our future is determined by our choices at present.

Other symbols and themes also inspire the students' independent learning. "A yellow wood" introduced at the beginning of the poem draws the students' attention. They report that the colour yellow is equally meaningful although it is embedded in the

source domain "trip in a wood". Yellow indicates the late autumn as the setting of the poem, the image of a wood covered with yellow fallen leaves, and the symbol of hope which is often related with the golden age or the prime of one's life.

This discussion triggers another one about the word "morning". It is on that morning that Frost knows how one way leads to another, and he doubts if he should ever come back. After consulting background references, the students establish the mapping between "morning" and Frost's apprenticeship of poetry writing and point out that everyone in the early morning cannot foresee what will happen in the following daytime, just like he cannot predict life and destiny. Life consists of a series of choices. One choice may influence our life dramatically. Choices mean to give up something in order to possess the other. The gain and loss only count for the choice-maker.

## 4. Conclusion

Robert Frost has designated that the ideal poetry writing begins in delight and ends in wisdom, and so it goes with poetry teaching, which is aimed not only to enhance the student's comprehension ability but also to cultivate their aesthetic and critical thinking ability.

This paper analyzes one of Robert Frost's poems to explain the creation and acquisition of the literary meaning, and to discover new meaning and aesthetic value, thus to fulfill the cognitive process from "ex-

plaining" to "discovering", which is also significant for its exploration to establish a systematic model in English literature teaching, which is of great significance to the teaching reform of the current courses for English majors in China<sup>[19]</sup>. To revive the courses of British and American literature from marginalization, many scholars have tried and contributed a lot by introducing new teaching approaches, and it proves to be effective for cognitive poetics applied to English poetry teaching<sup>[20]</sup>.

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# Autonomous Learning and the Flipped Classroom in Chinese Vocational Schools—A Warming-Up to Student-Centred Learning

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**Abstract:** In this study, the authors focus on the application of the flipped classroom in Chinese vocational schools. We argue the possibility of a flipped class as another way to employ student-centred learning in China where teacher-centred learning is still heavily influencing the whole educational sector. In other words, if student-centred learning is difficult to implement in the classroom due to various reasons such as the class size, an exam-oriented system and so on, can a flipped class approach take part in student-centred learning outside the classroom and if so how? Available data quantifying student learning using the flipped classroom as opposed to other student centred methods are presented. This paper will also look at the feasibility of using the flipped classroom in Chinese vocational schools where the students are historically believed to be poor learners. Finally, practices for the use of flipped classrooms in encouraging learning autonomy will be discussed.

**Keywords:** Autonomous learning, Flipped classroom, Flipped learning, Student-centred learning, Vocational schools and students

## 1. Introduction

As innovative as the “flipped classroom” sounds, it is not a new method at all, at least not to Chinese school teachers. Many of us have already flipped our classes by having students read texts or watch supplemental videos, or solve additional problems outside of class at home. This happened commonly in the past when technology was not easily accessed. The only difference between now and then is that we have much advanced

technology at hand thus freeing class lecture time from physical constraints while still delivering it as it is supposed to be.

The flipped classroom as a pedagogical learning model is currently receiving increasing attention at schools and colleges. As an educational technique, it usually consists of two parts: outside classroom activities and inside classroom activities. The former asks students to engage in individual learning on their own via computer-based instruction, such as a video clip of a lecture, whereas the latter is about interactive group learning amongst students and between students and teachers during the class. The crucial point of flipped classroom is that the short pre-recorded video lectures must be viewed by students before the class and normally at home so that it frees in-class time for exercises, projects and discussions. The video lecture is believed to be the critical part of a flipped classroom approach. It requires the teacher to carefully decide and plan what needs to be included in the video and how to make it audience-friendly and

easy to digest by the students.

It is not difficult to distinguish the differences of a student's experiences over conventional learning and flipped classroom learning. In the conventional or traditional learning model, students' presence is required for every single session. The class is implicitly dominated by the teacher's or instructor's lecture. Sometimes, perhaps more often nowadays, question-and-answer time is provided at the end of the lecture, which somehow does not necessarily lead to its intended outcomes as students are overwhelmed by the lecture contents and will not have had time to digest it adequately enough to be able to question at all. During the outside-classroom time, students are assigned work which is mostly designed to have students repeat and memorize the contents of the previous lecture given during the class session. We consider this kind of traditional learning passive learning which effectively eliminates the autonomous learning ability of students.

## 2. Autonomous learning through flipped classroom

In a flipped classroom, students watch the pre-recorded lecture before they are present in the classroom, so they are prepared and expected to be ready to actively engage in the discussion or any other related individual or small-group activities. Through this way of learning, it is believed that students learn actively and are in control of

their own learning. Active learning leads to autonomous learning and constructive learning which, consequently produces capabilities that society and employers would require from students when they enter the workforce.

The rationale of the flipped classroom learning model consists of both behavioural

and constructivist learning theories (Handwerker, 2012). The behavioural theory underpins the traditional classroom instruction and places the teacher at the centre of the classroom during the learning. Teachers are expected to control most activities such as lectures, drills, demonstrations and even during the question-and-answer time. It emphasizes Pavlov and Skinner's behavioural foundation of stimulus vs. response and focuses on credentialing (academic) authorities.

In the flipped classroom learning model, however, this part is not omitted but placed ahead of the class time which means students would watch the lecture video at home. This is done to facilitate in-class active learning, and at which point, brings out the rationale of constructivist learning theory. Constructivism advocates that individuals use personal experience to construct and understand knowledge and reflection to create meaning. Students take responsibility for their learning and are actively engaged rather than passive recipients of lecture content (McDonald, 2013). Teachers are not seen as the "commander" of learning, but rather collaborate with students to explore their competence and capability of autonomous learning and active learning.

During the period of in-class active learning, students will learn in a social-like environment with their classmates and peers in a less formal way as compared to the traditional learning environment. They would be exposed to many viewpoints and perspectives which they may find more engaging and are thus more willing to be involved as a

part of it. Not only with peers, but students would also collaborate with teachers, hence the learning accountability is reinforced by two parties' feedback: teachers and peers. Constructivism supports frequent and short assessments to evaluate students' progression to determine if there are any increases in knowledge retention and critical thinking ability. Stobart (2012) points out that shorter and more frequent formative assessment provides more valid and objective learning outcome than comprehensive summative exams.

## 2.1 Flipped classroom vs. flipped learning

In theory, the flipped classroom learning model should be able to increase the teachers' opportunity to identify errors in students' behaviour and thinking and provide constructive feedback as this learning model combines the two principal learning theories by complying with both behaviourist principles outside the classroom and constructivists' within it, but a flipped classroom does not always lead to active learning or flipped learning as it is supposed to be in theory.

### 2.1.1 The video lectures

There has been some criticism regarding the actual implementation of the flipped classroom learning model. First of all, Bergmann and Sams (2012) voiced their concern about generic videos substituting for teachers to deliver instruction and that videos are not adapted to the needs of the students in their own classroom which is actually a student's home. We have also noticed similar

problems in vocational colleges in our survey. The issues mostly concern the length and quality of the video. We all know that, ideally, teachers would make their own videos (with some assistance of technicians, of course, if needed). First of all, teachers need to be advised that the lecture videos should be limited to a maximum of 15 minutes which would give enough time for students to gain the knowledge and skills required because students have shown a certain degree of reluctance to sit at home watching “boring” lecture videos on a computer. In the traditional learning model, at least in the classroom, students can have some kind of interaction with the teacher and their classmates. So the first step is for teachers not to replace an hour-long class session lecture with an hour-long video. It is generally believed that short audio and video segments are favoured by students (Herreid & Schiller, 2013), so that there is still time for students to interact with and digest the knowledge and skills. Making the ideal video/audio lecture is difficult especially for beginners and this can be time-consuming and requires both academic expertise and technical skills from teachers and IT support staff.

### 2.1.2 Watching the video lectures

How can teachers be sure that students do watch the video lecture at home? This is another question which probably concerns most teachers. If students do not complete what they need to complete at home, the flipped classroom learning model will not be able to proceed to its next stage. For voca-

tional college students in China, this problem somehow worries teachers less as the students are all requested to live on campus and therefore, the overall atmosphere is considered more learning-oriented than when they are at home. Even if it is a concern, teachers can always request students to submit their reflection of watching, such as questions related debrief and so on. In order to have students do this, teachers should assign thoughtful questions together with the video lecture as homework and the questions can guide the students to explore the home study materials. Additionally, software platforms allow teachers to upload the video complete with pauses and questions that must be answered before the student proceeds to the next segment of the video. Teachers need to be aware that homework assigned to students needs to have a focus just as when teachers deliver it in the class, so that students will be able to come back and spend a tremendous amount of time interacting and communicating deeply and constructively.

To generalize what has been discussed, teachers can always start with small steps or just flip a small part of a session and take time to build up the confidence, expertise, resources and experiences before widening its use. Kim, et al. (2014) provided a table of three steps of implementing the flipped classroom learning model, which specifies what ought to be considered or done for each of them. It may also help to ask the following questions when a teacher is to utilize flipped classroom learning: Do I—

- continually observe and monitor students to make appropriate adjustments?
- provide students with different ways to learn content and demonstrate mastery?
- give students opportunities to engage in meaningful activities instead of teachers being the centre of the class?
- scaffold these activities and make them accessible to all students through differentiation and feedback?
- make myself available to all students and give class feedback in real time as needed?
- conduct ongoing formative assessments during class time through observation and by recording data to inform future instruction?
- collaborate and reflect with other educators and take responsibility for transforming my practice?
- prioritize concepts used in direct instruction for learners to access on their own?
- create and/or curate relevant content (typically videos) for my students?
- differentiate to make content accessible and relevant to all students?

Source:FLN,2014

## 2.2 Teachers in the flipped classroom

In a flipped classroom, teachers are arguably more important than when they teach in a traditional classroom (董黎明, 焦宝聪, 2014). They will feel challenged as they will need to provide students with rich resources and create opportunities for students to think critically. In addition, teachers will question what students have learned at home and make sure that students' questions are provided with in-depth answers. Teachers, contrary to the criticism that teachers' role is demoted in a flipped classroom learning model, will deal with much more unpredictable questions and learning scenarios, which requires teachers to put in more effort, time, knowledge and information. Especially in vocational settings, students will be in the 16—19 years old mid-adolescent age range and most of them are seen as weak learners compared to

general education students. In the flipped classroom, teachers will have to spend more time circulating in the classroom and if they spot any student not taking part in the group work or any sort of interactive activities, it will be immediately addressed. Based on these thoughts, we find it very convincing to conclude that the role of the teacher in a flipped classroom is far more challenging than in a traditional classroom and this may well explain why teachers feel threatened or discouraged to apply this particular learning model.

## 2.3 Flipped learning—warming up for student-centred learning

If the student-centred learning strategy sounds a bit threatening and time consuming to Chinese school teachers as we are under the pressure of improving students' exam scores, the flipped learning can be a good starting point to compromise without sacrificing any traditional class time. Driscoll

(2012) suggested that flipped learning can democratize the learning environment which is just a nickname for autonomous learning or student-centred learning. Instead of making students work alone in front of a computer, the flipped classroom learning actually stimulates the inspiration of the student-teacher interaction at a later stage when students return to the classroom. Such interaction and engagement of learning can develop life-long learners, increase students' engagement in the materials and therefore encourage in-depth and autonomous learning (卢海燕, 2014). One of the major benefits of the flipped concept is that it frees tremendous amount of class time so that teachers can use it to create engaging learning experiences for their students. For such an engaging learning, it is also known as student-centred learning or autonomous learning. In some countries like China, Korea, Japan and so on, the essential task of schools is to promote their students' academic achievement and progress. To fulfil this commitment, schools and teachers have to follow the exam-oriented educational system and operate or manage the teaching and learning to comply with the requirement. Although it is fully understood that today's employment market requires schools to provide them with graduates capable of life-long learning, team working, problem solving, time managing etc. , schools and teachers in China feel it is too risky to adapt such a leaning model or rationale. Their biggest concern for such an approach is that they do not have class time for it as they must prepare students for exams. The flipped classroom learning model

may be just the right approach to start as it will free some class time to implement the student-centred learning or autonomous learning which helps to improve students' retention of information and the effectiveness of student engagement in learning, in addition to making them more marketable employees in the long-term.

According to Cognitive Load Theory, there is a limit to the amount of information that can be used, processed and stored by working memory, and overloading that limit undermines the learning process (Vygotsky, 1978). Musallam (2010) found a significant relationship between mental effort and pre-training for students, which indicates that students use less cognitive resources to learn new material if they have received pre-training. Other studies (Mayer, 2009) have also suggested that pre-training may be an effective method of managing the intrinsic cognitive load and therefore, provides one potential mechanism of the effect of the flipped model on learning. The "watching lecture video at home" part of the flipped classroom functions just as the pre-training does and this process enhances learning taking place in due course (何克抗, 2014).

As English teachers, the authors of this paper also paid extra attention to how the flipped classroom learning model impacts students' language learning. In Marshall and DeCapua's research (2013), they noted that, in traditional classrooms, English language learners "put most of their effort into the lower levels" of Bloom's Taxonomy, which is remembering and understanding as they attempt to follow the teacher's instructional

delivery(Another reason contributing to this is that there is usually a lack of student-centred learning, such as interaction and engagement. Chinese English teachers would be busy teaching the grammar, lexicon, syntax and so on but leave no time for real language communication). In the flipped classroom, however, teachers can move the effort and time on lower levels of the taxonomy to outside-class time learning so as to leave the group learning space in the class under the supervision and instruction of their English teachers(李京南,伍忠杰,2015). By working this way, students can study the linguistic concepts on their own. When using videos, students can pause, rewind, and review the lesson at any time. In class, teachers and students can spend the time focusing on the upper levels of the taxonomy, which is to apply, analyze, and create(吕婷婷,2015). This would give struggling learners more opportunities to understand and improve before they come to class.

Student-centred instruction focuses on students' engagement and active learning and the fact that these characteristics of student-centred learning reflect what should already be occurring in the classrooms. Just as in student-centred learning, flipped learn-

ing is not a defined model but a result of teachers' using different tools and resources to meet a particular learning condition and individual student's needs. The implementing mechanism of moving the“lower level of the taxonomy”out of the classroom maximizes the amount of time for student-centred learning and autonomous learning, so that teachers can spend more time and attention on individual students' requests and students have more time to spend working with each other.

The notion of a flipped classroom is that it provides more time to address the needs of individual students and enables student-centred learning, and at the same time, “lower level taxonomy” of learning goals and materials are still covered outside of class time. According to Michael(2006), students build mental models of what is learned, deliberately test the validity of those models, and fix faulty models. The flipped learning, as one way to reflect on student-centred learning enhances these abilities of students and are more likely to achieve meaningful learning because “once you engage the students' minds, there's an eagerness to learn, to master”. (Berrett, 2012)

### 3. Vocational students, flipped learning and student-centred learning

The discussion on implementation of the flipped classroom in this paper is mainly about the trial and practice in vocational schools. In China, secondary vocational college/school

students are, in general, considered much weaker students than the students in general schools. They appear to exhibit difficulties in learning, especially in subjects such as mathematics, physics

and language etc. They are seen as disadvantaged and unfavoured students. As a consequence they have a lower self-esteem than general secondary school students. They tend to show strong unwillingness and disinterest of learning. In addition, in an informal survey of vocational school teachers in Guangdong Province, many teachers reported levels of AD(H)D and other learning challenges that exceeded 80% of students in some vocational schools. This is not surprising, given that the traditional teaching model in Chinese schools rarely addresses these learning differences thus contributing to the misconception that vocational students are poor learners.

A government supported pedagogy program called Student-Centred Learning which aims to equip vocational teachers with the capability of encouraging, motivating and attracting vocational students to be autonomous learners has been ongoing for years in Guangdong Province. Since vocational school students are expected to leave school with a specific practical skill which usually has to do with the abilities of applying, creating and analyzing, the flipped classroom model appears to fit in ideally. In a post-course study, flipping the classroom was concluded to be effective in both helping students understand course material and develop design skills (Warter-Perez & Dong, 2012) in art, but also in subjects like business and economy at the vocational education level (Butt, 2014).

For most students and for vocational students in particular as they are seen as weaker and disinterested learners, they tend to reject or resist a new pedagogy at the initial stage (Everly MC, 2013). In a study of

the flipped classroom learning model done by Zhao and Ho(2014), they concluded that enrolment was decreasing for the flipped course, “although the evidence that this was caused by the flipped classroom is scant”. In the 2013 administration, students’ opinions about the “flipped classroom” model were variable, with 46% of the 37 participants preferring or strongly preferring the flipped model, and 38% of participants preferring or strongly preferring the traditional model. There is no strong evidence of any significant impact of the flipped classroom on mid-term examination scores.

The five-year-long student-centred learning project carried out in Guangdong Province has resulted positively in vocational learning sectors. Students show high attendance, interest, engagements and even enthusiasm in the class session and they also found that discussions with a high percentage of engaged students and cross-talk among students to be very beneficial. There are, however, some concerns that the SCL model takes much class time, so it is therefore recommended in this paper that the implementation of flipped classroom learning frees more time for SCL learning activities. With the largest share of Chinese vocational education, Guangdong Province pays great attention to education quality, which is shown in a series of training to update teachers’ teaching theories and skills. After having received the SCL training on a broad scale, teachers actively attempt to put flipped classroom model into practice, which requires teachers to master video-making techniques. Based on this requirement, the

corresponding administration department in Guangdong Province has launched a large number of micro-class design training sessions, which prompts smoother development of SCL flipped classrooms.

## 4. Survey on utilization of flipped learning in vocational colleges

A survey has been conducted on the attitude of students' using flipped classroom. The teachers who delivered this particular teaching mode are those who had received SCL training and used flipped classroom model in their teaching. The survey was carried out via online questionnaire and 43 valid responses were returned.

Besides factual information, such as name, age, grade and major, the questionnaire mainly sought to explore students' attitudes towards learning outcomes, in-class learning, students' benefits and interest and extra-curricular resources and learning.

The results of the survey are as follows:

Attitudes	Statements	SD	D	U	A	SA
Towards learning outcomes	5. The flipped classroom learning model helps me learn more in the learning process	2.33%	4.65%	23.26%	44.19%	25.58%
	7. Compared with traditional lecturing, the flipped classroom helps me learn more.	6.98%	4.65%	37.21%	34.88%	16.28%
	11. The in-class exercise helps me do better in exams.	6.98%	2.33%	37.21%	41.86%	11.63%
	13. The flipped classroom model improves my score in tests/exams.	4.65%	2.33%	39.53%	34.88%	18.6%
	18. The flipped classroom model can be applied to any subject I'm learning.	4.65%	4.65%	27.91%	44.19%	18.6%
Towards in-class learning	8. The in-class exercise and assignment help me find out what I should work on	9.3%	4.65%	20.93%	53.49%	11.63%
	10. When there is extra time, proper in-class activities improve learning.	4.65%	4.65%	23.26%	48.84%	18.6%
	16. I like the interaction in class.	4.65%	4.65%	23.26%	41.86%	25.58%
Towards the influence on students' personal life	6. The flipped classroom learning model gives me more burden.	13.95%	9.3%	55.81%	13.95%	6.98%
	9. The flipped classroom learning model helps me practice active thinking and autonomous learning	4.65%	2.33%	32.56%	48.84%	11.63%
	14. The flipped classroom model improves my motivation to learn.	4.65%	4.65%	27.91%	44.19%	18.6%

Towards extra-curricular resources and learning	12. I can learn independently and autonomously after class.	4. 65%	2. 33%	41. 86%	34. 88%	16. 28%
	15. The videos are watcher-friendly and suitable for students to learn	9. 3%	2. 33%	30. 23%	41. 86%	16. 28%
	17. Teachers provide sufficient learning materials and resources for me to learn after class.	6. 98%	4. 65%	23. 26%	39. 53%	25. 58%

The data collected shows that the overall attitudes of the students' using the flipped classroom learning model in general are positive, but only by a small percentage. The percentage of positive response to "I like the interaction in class" ranks at the top with 77. 3% which to certain degree still appears to be not as high as expected. Although only 20. 88% students do not feel the flipped classroom puts extra burden on them, there are still close to 56% of students who an-

swered they are not sure about it. Half of the students are not confident the flipped classroom learning model can help improve their exam scores which are considered very important in Chinese education.

In short, the data indicate that students enjoy this learning model and feel encouraged to become autonomous and active in learning, which is difficult to find through traditional learning.

## 5. Conclusion

The survey data collected from vocational colleges in southern China demonstrates an overall positive feedback. It does show that the class session encourages learners to learn autonomously, as Gorman (2012) pointed out that "any learner-centred educator would provide activities in the classroom that are action based, authentic, connected and collaborative, innovative, high level, engaging, experience based, project based, inquiry based, and self-actualizing". By implementing the flipped classroom learning model, the major concern that "the student-centred learning model takes too much of class time and therefore makes teachers feel stressed to complete the re-

quired curriculum plan and exam practices" will take efforts and time to be re-assured.

Despite the barriers and concerns of applying the flipped classroom learning model, as Gojak (2012) pointed out that it is not whether to flip the classroom, but teachers need to ask how they can use the advantages of this model to become more effective and increase students' understanding so that to make the flipped classroom a bridge to a learner-centred classroom environment. This environment, in the end, should be able to help students with deeper learning (Bergmann & Sams, 2012) that educators are aiming at.

The study also illustrates that more

than half of surveyed students think highly of the flipped classroom learning model and believe that it cannot only improve their academic performance but also benefit their personal life. Despite the promising results, some constructive suggestions must be put forward here. In the survey, only 20.88% of students expressed that the after-class learning is not a burden, while the others are either not sure or think differently, so teachers should design the class more effectively and skillfully so that the students do not want to give up due to fatigue. This figure indicates that a good number of students are not ready for flipped classroom learning as 葛瑞峰(2016) also concluded from his study. In addition, if the learning model gradually becomes a fixed routine, students will eventually be bored. So teachers should cultivate their creativity and form a learning community to share ideas to create a more interesting and engaging learning experience.

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# Emotions and Feelings in Language Advising for Autonomy

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**Abstract:** Although the literature on second language acquisition recognizes the importance of the affective dimension in language learning, little is known about how to support the affective dimension throughout the autonomous learning process.

Language advising is a privileged space for addressing, besides the cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects, the affective dimensions of the learning process. Most importantly, within the professional and interpersonal relationship created between advisor and learner, it is easier to reflect on the emotional and affective implications of learning.

This study explores the role of emotions and feelings in the learner's and the advisor's discourse, with the aim of shedding light on affect in autonomous language learning processes and thus helping language professionals to recognize and deal with affective issues as they arise. Based on audio-recordings and transcripts of individual advising sessions, the research design focuses on discourse analysis of the learners' and the advisor's discourse.

The results show significant expression of emotions in the learner's discourse, related both to past learning experiences and to planning further learning steps. In the advisor's discourse, emotions are less apparent, as the advisor, rather, tends to mirror, empathize or counterbalance the learner's emotions.

**Keywords:** Affect, Autonomous language learning, Emotions, Language advising

## 1 Introduction

As a language advisor at the Centre for Independent Language Learning (CILL) of the Freie Universität Berlin, I meet several students every year and I often notice that,

besides cognitive and metacognitive aspects (such as: How can I improve my writing? How can I make a study plan?), the students address affective aspects, and, in particular, emotions related to the learning process, such as pleasure, enthusiasm for the target language, satisfaction for successful learning, but also anxiety, distress while learning, or frustration about exam failure. In addition, even when they are not addressed explicitly, affective factors constitute a subtext in many learners' discourses about their learning.

Therefore, I started to reflect on how to

react to the learners' emotions if expressed in the advising session and how to support learners in dealing with affective aspects throughout the learning process.

For this reason, I investigated emotions and feelings in language advising settings as expressed both in the learner's and the advisor's discourse, with the aim of gaining a better understanding of their role in autonomous language learning processes and to help advisors to focus, where necessary, on affective aspects in the learner's discourse and address them while supporting the development of the learner's autonomy.

## 2. Emotions and feelings in autonomous language learning

### 2.1 Emotions and feelings

Emotions and feelings are at the intersection of neurobiological, physical and mental phenomena. Although from the neurobiological point of view emotions are defined as observable, transitory reactions to a stimulus, whereas feelings are the non-observable, private experience of emotion (Damasio, 2002<sup>[1]</sup>), from the psychological point of view and in everyday life, the two notions overlap (Frijda, 2008<sup>[2]</sup>).

Generated at the meeting-point between body and mind, emotions arise as consequences of a cognitive activity, an appraisal of an event (either external or internal) considered relevant for an individual's personal goals or well-being (Lazarus, 1991<sup>[3]</sup>). From a sociocognitivist perspective, emotions are considered as resulting from the interaction

between internal factors, such as the individual's attitudes, predispositions, states of mind and motivation, and external, situational and contextual factors. Within the language learning context, these factors could be, for example, a demanding or an enjoyable learning situation, a learning task, interaction in the foreign language (Brewer, 2013<sup>[4]</sup>), and/or interaction with peers, teachers or partners involved in the learning process.

Emotions are essential to decision-making, behaviour and also learning, which results from a close interaction between emotion and cognition (Damasio, 2002<sup>[1]</sup>; LeDoux, 1996<sup>[5]</sup>; Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007<sup>[6]</sup>), body and mind.

Emotions and feelings are part of the more general notion of affect, a multidimensional construct including, besides emotions,

subjective beliefs, attitudes, motivation, self-efficacy and personality traits which allow individuals to feel and to act in different situations and social contexts (Bown & White, 2010<sup>[7]</sup>).

Although the role of emotions and affect in foreign language learning has been investigated from different perspectives (cf. Arnold, 1999<sup>[8]</sup>; Mercer, 2005<sup>[9]</sup>; Pavlenko, 2006<sup>[10]</sup>; Kramsch, 2009<sup>[11]</sup>; Dewaele, 2010<sup>[12]</sup>, 2011<sup>[13]</sup>), only recently, research has started to focus on affect in autonomous learning processes (Bown & White, 2010<sup>[7]</sup>; Candas & Eneau, 2010<sup>[14]</sup>; Brewer, 2013<sup>[4]</sup>) and in language advising settings (Tassinari & Ciekanski, 2013<sup>[15]</sup>; Carette, Thiébauer & Nassau, 2015<sup>[16]</sup>; Yamashita, 2015<sup>[17]</sup>).

In language advising settings, in particular, learners' emotions and affect can play a significant role and therefore be an "essential resource" (Yamashita, 2015<sup>[17]</sup>, p. 79) to foster metacognition and learner autonomy. In order for this to happen, it is crucial that learner and advisor are aware of them.

## 2.2 Language advising for autonomy

Language advising is a form of learning support in which an advisor helps a learner to organize and reflect on their learning process in individual face-to-face sessions or as an email exchange, often as a complement to self-access learning. The learner-advisor relationship is "a professional as well as an interpersonal relationship that concerns learning in its cognitive and subjective, as

well as personal dimensions [...]" (Ciekanski, 2007<sup>[18]</sup>, p. 125). The aim of language advising is to provide guidance and support for language learning and for learner autonomy.

Learner autonomy is the capacity of the learner to self-direct and self-regulate, at least to some extent, their learning process, which means making decisions concerning their learning: setting goals, choosing materials and methods, defining learning pace, monitoring and evaluating learning outcomes and learning processes ( Holec, 1981<sup>[19]</sup>). This can be done either in self-directed learning mode, such as self-access learning, or within and/or alongside a language course.

Learning autonomously is not intended to be learning alone. On the contrary, interdependence (Little, 1991<sup>[20]</sup>) or reliance (relatedness: Aden, Grimshaw, & Penz, 2010<sup>[21]</sup>) with other actors along the learning process are essential to autonomy (see also Murray, 2014<sup>[22]</sup>).

In autonomous learning processes, the role of emotions is even more relevant since, in order to be able to act autonomously, learners need to feel autonomous (Aoki, 1999<sup>[23]</sup>). This means that in order to be able to make decisions about their own learning and to self-regulate the learning process, learners have to feel, and be able to overcome possible difficulties and, among other things, be aware of the way affective aspects may promote their learning process or hinder it.

### 3. Research questions, methods and context

#### 3.1 Research questions

As an applied linguist, for me, the investigation of the language advising discourse itself seemed to be the first step into this field. Therefore, my research aimed at investigating the following questions:

- (i) How are emotions and feelings expressed in the learners' and advisor's discourse?
- (ii) How frequent are they and what role do they play in the advising session and the development of learner autonomy?

#### 3.2 The research context

The research was conducted at the language advising service of the Centre for Independent Language Learning (CILL) at the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. The CILL is a self-access centre open to students and staff of the Freie Universität and other universities in Berlin (<http://www.sprachenzentrum.fu-berlin.de/slz/index.html>).

Although language modules at the Freie Universität include an element of independent learning, attendance at the CILL is not compulsory and may be freely chosen by the learner or negotiated with the teacher. Similarly, the language advising service is optional and open to all learners and offers a cross-language service for learners of all languages.

#### 3.3 Research method

The investigation was conducted on a corpus of material gathered from four advising sessions with three learners (L1, L6, and L9, all female) and one advisor (C1). The sessions were selected from a larger corpus of recordings, according to various criteria, as being representative of different learners' requests, attitudes and learning situations. In the session analysed, the learners were all German native speakers, whereas the advisor was not.

At the time of the advising sessions (from February 2012 to July 2012), two of the learners were enrolled in language modules at the Freie Universität and one of them was enrolled in language courses of another university; all three learners reported that they were also learning autonomously. The sessions were audio-recorded with the consent of the learners. For one learner (L1), two subsequent sessions were recorded. For learners L6 and L9, only one session is available.

For the purposes of this paper I will take into consideration only the analysis of the session with L6 and C1.

The research was a qualitative, explorative study based on content and discourse analysis. The steps of the research design were the following:

1. Audio-recording the advising sessions.
2. Transcribing the advising sessions u-

sing software which synchronizes audio-track and transcript (<http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php>).

3. Selecting a classification of emotions and feelings (Plutchik, 1980<sup>[24]</sup>, 2001<sup>[25]</sup>), and criteria to identify them in the learner's and advisor's discourse (Kehrein, 2002<sup>[26]</sup>).

4. Conducting content analysis to identify expression of emotions and feelings based on the transcript and the audio-re-

cording and validating their results in a research team (a fellow researcher and four student assistants).

5. Conducting discourse analysis to identify the speakers' communicative attitudes and the discourse sequences.

6. Interviewing the learners in semi-structured interviews in order to triangulate the data.

For more details, see Tassinari, 2016<sup>[27]</sup>.

## 4. Findings

As mentioned previously, for the purposes of the present paper, I will focus on the findings concerning the advising session between L6 and C1. L6, a student teacher of Italian, uses the advising service at her teacher's advice in order to improve her academic writing in Italian. Although she is bilingual, with an Italian mother and a German father, she has problems with academic writing in Italian. She brings to the session an essay she has written in Italian, which she has just received which has been graded by her teacher. She is dissatisfied, even frustra-

ted, with the low grade she received; in addition, she does not understand what she did wrong in every case. The session is devoted to analysing the essay, eliciting and reflecting on the learner's learning habits and writing strategies, presenting some resources and learning opportunities, suggesting tasks and, ultimately, making plans for her further learning.

The content analysis shows that traces of emotions occupy a significant part of the learner's discourse, and are less present in the advisor's discourse, as Tab. 1 shows.

Tab. 1 Emotions expressed by L6 and C1

Adv. session	Total speech turns (L6+C1)	Traces of emotions L6	Emotions expressed C1
L6-C1	556	152 (75 negative, 69 positive and 8 mixed)	8 (6 positive, 2 negative)

Examples of negative emotions by L6 are disappointment, annoyance and frustration about her performance, frustration about the difficulty in understanding her teacher's comments, insecurity and embarrassment about her competences in academic

Italian. Positive emotions are an overall serenity, satisfaction with her language learning in general, interest (cf. Silvia, 2008<sup>[28]</sup>) in new materials and tasks the advisor suggests, confidence about her further learning.

The learner's emotions are differently

distributed in the sequences of the advising discourse (see Tab. 2 in the Appendix). While formulating her main question (i. e. how to improve her academic writing in Italian) and reporting on her learning experience, L6 expresses dissatisfaction, frustration, annoyance and insecurity more frequently than when reporting on the learning methods. The reflection on the essay she wrote in Italian, conducted together with the advisor, also generates a peak of negative emotions: L6 expresses frustration, insecurity, embarrassment, and even stubbornness while discussing her mistakes. However, she also shows acceptance and, occasionally, even serenity when understanding some of them. Another sequence which is dense in emotions is L6's expression of intent and her planning for further learning. In this case, the emotions are mixed: Beside apprehension and annoyance, L6 expresses interest in new learning strategies and materials she has been shown, as well as anticipation, hope and optimism for her future learning.

C1 rarely expresses her own emotions, for example, that of unease regarding a formulation she finds in L6's essay; on the contrary, she mostly mirrors L6's emotions, for example, her frustration while writing in her second language. This mirroring can be categorized as "empathy", a social emotion (Ekman, 2003<sup>[29]</sup>) which is particularly relevant for language advisors. As the ability to take the perspective of the other, experiencing the viewpoint of another individual but maintaining the self-other distinction, empathy enables "intersubjectivity and its correlate, objectivity" (Thirioux & Berthoz,

2010<sup>[30]</sup>, p. 48). Empathizing and mirroring the learner's perspective may help to raise the learner's awareness and bring new insights into the learning process. In an instance during the L6-C1 session, C1's positive mirroring of what L6 says about her learning triggers a positive reaction in L6, making her switch from anger to security:

L6 17<sup>①</sup>: "Im ersten Moment scheint es richtig zu sein *{steigend}*, oder für mich härt es sich halt richtig an, wo ich denke, ja, im Deutschen ist das auch so *{lacht}* ... und dann passt das gar nicht im Italienischen und das ? rgert mich total, weil *{atmet ein}* dadurch ist die Note von der Hausarbeit total runtergegangen *{leiser}* ... (At first it seems to be right, or at least it sounds right to me *{intonation goes up}*, since I think, yes, is it the same in German *{laughs}* ... and then it doesn't work in Italian and this completely annoys me, because *{inhales}* it made the grade of my paper go down *{lower}*.)"

C1 18: "Mhm."

L6 19: "Das ist natürlich ärgerlich also *{leiser}*. (And this is of course annoying *{lower}*.)"

C1 20: "Sie haben eine ganz gute Vorstellung, wie, äh, wie das jetzt bei Ihnen ist. (You seem to be quite well aware of how things work for you.)"

L6 21: "Ja *{betont}*. (Yes *{stressed}*.)"

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① The numbers next to L6 and C1 indicate the sequence of utterances in the interaction.

## 5. Conclusion

The findings of the discourse analysis show that the presence of emotions in the learner's discourse is relevant and at times dominant. Some phases of the autonomous learning process seem to be more susceptible to generating emotions in the learner than others, such as reflecting on her own learning experiences, evaluating her competences, progress or failure and planning further learning. Although these findings cannot be generalized, since learners and learning processes are unique, particular attention should be paid to these sensitive phases of the learning process. Advisors and teachers may reflect ahead on how to support learners in these phases.

The relevant presence of emotions in the learner's discourse shows that the affective dimension should be carefully dealt with in the advising session. For this reason, emotions should be integrated into the research agenda and into the training of language advisors, in order to identify ways to better support the affective and personal dimensions of language learning and autonomous language learning in particular.

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## Appendix

Tab. 2 L6's and C1's emotions in the sequences of the advising session

Sequence	Total speech turns(L6+C1)	Emotion figures	Emotion labels
Learner's report	112		
Learner's question (negative emotions about her failure prevail)	8	L6: 6 (1 positive, 6 negative) C1:1	L6: remorse, apprehension, annoyance, dissatisfaction, but also satisfaction C1:confidence,trust
On learning experiences (L6 is bilingual, but uses Italian mostly in conversation and does not have experience in academic writing)	72	L6: 35 (10 positive, 21 negative, 4 mixed)	L6: satisfaction, serenity, surprise, expectation, dissatisfaction, insecurity, remorse, annoyance, frustration, embarrassment
On learning methods (while writing in Italian, L6 usually translates from German)	32	L6: 9 (5 positive, 3 negative, 1 mixed) C1:1	L6: satisfaction, insecurity, remorse, annoyance, frustration, embarrassment C1: empathy
Cooperative work	326		
Reflecting on the text (L6 reflects with C1 on her mistakes in the paper; she expresses frustration; she did not understand many of them; she shows interest in the reflection)	159	L6: 36 (9 positive, 25 negative, 2 mixed) C1:3	L6: serenity, security, annoyance, frustration, stubbornness, insecurity, embarrassment, anger, surprise, desperation C1: empathy, unease, serenity
Reflecting on learning strategies (L6 shows interest in reflecting on her learning strategies and she is open to the remarks C1 makes; C1 suggests how to enlarge academic vocabulary and practice translation)	90	L6: 11 (8 positive, 2 negative, 1 mixed)	L6: surprise, acceptance, interest, expectation, serenity, dissatisfaction, aversion
Expression of intents and planning further learning (While planning steps for future learning, L6 defines her priorities and shows positive expectation, interest, but also insecurity, for example what she should start with)	77	L6: 36 (9 positive, 25 negative, 2 mixed)	L6: anticipation, confidence, optimism, expectation, hope, interest, insecurity, anxiety, apprehension, annoyance, trust
Presenting resources (L6 is interested in the resources C1 presents her; and she is not satisfied with the old dictionary she works with)	40	L6: 13 (9 positive, 4 negative) C1:2	L6: interest, amazement, aversion, serenity, frustration, annoyance C1: serenity, empathy
Organizational sequence C1 informs L6 about a tutorial for Italian offered at the CILL. L6 would like to go there, but does not know if she can because of her work schedule	67	L6: 6 (4 positive, 1 negative, 1 mixed)	L6: interest, negative expectations, embarrassment
Conversational sequence	2	No emotions expressed	

# ESP Materials to Develop Students' Learning Autonomy

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**Abstract:** English is a compulsory subject and given only one or two semesters at tertiary education in Indonesia. This subject is to help the students read and access various information to enrich their main subjects during their study and prepare for their professionals in the future. However, some studies find that these English classes are boring because the materials are not useful for the students. Based on need analysis, the non-English department students wish the lecturers to provide materials in line with their majoring subjects.

This paper discusses the characteristics of the materials developed by means of action research together with a subject lecturer and a class of civil engineering students at Politeknik Negeri Bandung Polban, a state polytechnic in Indonesia. Two of the characteristic is concerning with the thinking framework of the civil engineering students and the themes of the materials.

These materials have been tried out for two semesters, and the results indicated that the students' learning autonomy develops. After using the materials for four weeks(150 minutes a week), the students attempted to select types of materials that needed to be discussed in the class and those uploaded into e-learning programs so that they were able to access, prepare the materials for the next class and learn these materials outside the class.

**Keywords:** ESP, Learning autonomy, Materials for civil engineering

## 1. Introduction

The Ministry of National Education in Indonesia states that the teaching and learning approaches are centralized to the learners' potentials, levels or development, needs, and environment. One of Indonesian educational goals is to lead the learners to the process of lifelong learning so that they become autonomous learners and persons<sup>[1][2]</sup>. Being an autonomous person is human rights<sup>[3]</sup>, and this is one of the end goals of education<sup>[4]</sup>. It should be enhanced and practiced at schools<sup>[5]</sup> by allowing students to develop their learning autonomy through learner-centered learning process<sup>[6]</sup>. It is expected that when learners leave schools, they have lifelong learning, are capable of helping themselves face their worlds and solve their future problems. One of the tools to help them achieve this goal is by encouraging them to learn and acquire one international language. This language will make them able to enrich their knowledge and communicate with the people from other countries.

Indonesian Government has selected one international language, namely English<sup>[7]</sup>. English has a special position as it functions as a tool to communicate with international society and it is regarded as the official language of ASEAN<sup>[8]</sup>. It is expected that when learners leave schools, they can solve their future problems by communicating, collaborating with other people from other countries, and having lifelong learning. In other words, they become auton-

omous persons, responsible members of society<sup>[9]</sup>.

Since English is very important for Indonesians, it is a compulsory subject in higher education. University students usually have to take this subject at least one semester. Teaching these students often English lecturers are challenged with various problems, one of them is caused by the mismatch of expectations and responsibilities between students' and lecturers' expectations<sup>[10][11]</sup>. Most college students state that they are eager to learn English to be able to speak fluently<sup>[12][13]</sup> even though they rarely use it in daily communication because English is a foreign language in Indonesia. In contrast, the lecturers have to carry out the institutional curriculum focusing on academic reading and writing skills<sup>[11]</sup>. This is to help the students acquire the language by obtaining lots of English exposure from various written texts either books or websites and catch up with the development of science and technology and develop learners' autonomy<sup>[11]</sup>. Further, the students also complain that the contents of lecturers' selected texts for practicing reading skills are not useful for them<sup>[14][11]</sup>.

Having English course that enhance learning autonomy in non-English departments is mostly dealing with English for Specific Purposes(ESP) which need analysis is necessary to be conducted to find the students' wants, lacks, and needs<sup>[15][6]</sup>. The results of need analysis showed that the civil

engineering students at Politeknik Negeri Bandung (Polban) wanted to develop their productive skills, mostly speaking and some of them to improve writing. In addition, they like to have some films, and materials dealing with their main subjects. The students' English levels were mostly elementary, and few of them were intermediate [13]. Their English learning experiences, when they were studying at high schools, were mostly doing grammar exercises using their workbooks. The students' needs were derived from Indonesian Qualification Framework (KKNI)<sup>[16]</sup> and American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)<sup>[17]</sup> which both state that the professional civil engineers should be able to communicate with their professional colleagues and others. They need to be able to describe and report their works, give in-

structions and presentations and fill in forms, write memos, emails, business letters, write simple reports and technical reports [16][17]. At Polban, these communication skills should be developed within two semesters. However, this paper would only discuss the materials for the first semester.

Considering the mismatched expectations between the students' and the lecturers', and the results of the need analysis, what are the characteristics of the English materials? The answers are based on these following theoretical concepts claimed by experts namely the locations for learning autonomy can be developed, the lecturers' roles, the characteristics of autonomous learners, and the results of the provided treatments.

## 2. Theoretical concepts

This part discusses the locations to develop learners' autonomy, the lectures' roles, and the characteristics of autonomous learners.

### a) Where to develop learners' autonomy

The end goal of education is to develop learners to autonomous persons [4]. Learners should be able to improve their life by being able to think and act as free and self-determining persons, and this can be achieved through education [18][5] because it is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know in class [6,3]. Learners should learn and practice their learning autonomy either inside or outside the classroom. They have to explore, interpret and try to practice their

'school knowledge' in their daily activities so that their knowledge' becomes "action knowledge" as cited by Barnes in [19]. Thus, every subject in higher education should encourage the students to develop their learning autonomy, including in English classes.

### b) Lecturers' roles

When the lecturers develop learners' autonomy, they are advised to make learners willing and able to direct their own learning, or make a move from teacher-directed teaching to learner-directed learning [20] by providing models, explaining the benefits, and practicing extensively [21].

Lecturers act as guides, facilitators of learning, counselors, and resources [22][4] by

setting up dialogues, reorganize, and refresh learners' prior knowledge and strategies so that learners are able to reach their potential cognitive levels [23][24][25]. They build environment where their knowledge is combined with the learners' knowledge, experiences, needs, and preferred learning styles [20]. In addition, lecturers need to be able to use resources efficiently and skillfully [26]. They should encourage learners to be actively involved, take initiative, and to engage in reflective and evaluative process [27], take intervention when learners are leading into "blind alley" [28].

Lecturers, including English lecturers, should be flexible and resourceful by providing models, practices to the students. Lecturers need to select and develop appropriate materials including the classroom activities to exploit these materials to develop the students' learning autonomy.

c) Some characteristics of autonomous learners

Autonomous learners are those who are able to "take charge of their own learning" as claimed by Holec in [29][30][24] and "learning is hard work" [31:145]. Learners should be willing to spend time, energy, and apply various changeable strategies to learn and acquire what they learn. When learning a language, learners apply various techniques, approaches, carry out deliberate actions in order to facilitate their learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information [32]. Further Oxford claims that the best language learners use strategies ranging from naturalistic language practices to analytic, rule-based strategies [33]. They are oriented

toward the broad goal of communicative competence, linguistic, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence [34]. These process requires realistic interaction using meaning and contextual language [29].

The main characteristic of autonomous learners is "the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning ..." [18]. Learners will be able to learn autonomously when they have "willingness" and "ability"; willingness depends on their motivation and self-confidence, and ability depends on their knowledge and skills [35].

Good learners can regulate their motivation, either intrinsic or extrinsic [36]. They can maintain more mastery, focus their learning on their goals, and increase task value by attempting to make the task more relevant or useful to their career, experiences or lives [29][37]. Learners with strong motivation will continuously learn thing, play, explore and engage in activities with full of fun, excitement and challenge. This motivation may develop learners' confidence.

Autonomous learners have knowledge and skills [35]. Knowledge can be the knowledge of the world and the subjects they learn; and they are applied appropriately and integratedly. Skills can be strategies and skills of learning and others which are applied dynamically with great flexibility. Further, they can determine objectives, select methods and techniques to be used, and evaluate their learning.

Many experts claim that autonomous learners have insight into their learning styles and strategies [30]. They know well a-

about their needs and wants, have desire to learn, make their learning to happen, generate ideas, provide themselves with learning opportunities, and make use of the resources available [38]. They pay attention to the form as well as the content [34]. They are able to learn effectively both face-to-face and distance, in a classroom with peers and individually.

People can become autonomous persons by learning and practicing their autonomy at schools. Teachers and lecturers facilitate

them with models and various resources and help them move to learner-directed learning and become autonomous learners. Autonomous language learners have the tendency to learn driven by their strong motivation to achieve their communicative competence as far as what they learn is useful for them. They have confidence and attempt to develop their ability by applying various strategies to recall linguistic and content area information using various resources anywhere.

### 3. Methodology

When developing the materials for the students of civil engineering at Polban, qualitative action research was applied. It models a process of reflective cycle on professional action [39] which focuses on problems and aims at solving problems [40][41]. The research was conducted together with a civil engineering lecturer, another English lecturer, and the students.

The first cycle was a diagnostic phase, it was to perceive the students' response when they learned English using materials which, from the lecturer's point of view, they were in line with the students' wants and main subjects. The second cycle was to solve the problems encountered and to integrate the materials to the students' main subjects and the new curriculum.

### 4. Results of treatments

This section presents the process of developing the English materials in brief and the two-cycle results of trying out those materials. The materials were designed for English classes of Civil Engineering Department at Polban. Finally, the characteristics of the materials are discussed.

#### a) Results of Cycle 1; Diagnostic phase

Cycle 1 was to develop the first draft of ESP materials for civil engineering students because suitable ESP materials for these students

were very limited. At the beginning, the English lecturer attempted to accommodate the students' wants. This was to develop the students' motivation and to make the material useful for these students as stated by [29][37]. The results of need analysis conducted before this study showed that most civil engineering students wanted to learn English to develop their speaking skills [11][12]. They like to learn English by watching films or video and reading authentic texts dealing with their majoring subjects [11][12].

In addition to catering for the students' wants, there were at least six other considerations. First, besides speaking skills, some students would like to develop their writing skills, oral communication skills, and reading skills. Second, the institutional goal was to develop reading and writing skills. Third, the lecturer perceived that from the very beginning of the first semester the students were always busy with their engineering drawing assignments. Fourth, Oxford's claim that students need to obtain language exposures from authentic context [29]. Fifth, students also need to develop strategic competence, linguistic and content area information [32][33][34]. Finally, students need to learn and acquire the language in meaningful contexts [29].

Considering these facts, the topic of the first chapter was dealing with 'Engineering Drawing'. This topic was divided into three units about Shapes, Drawing Instruments, and Types of Engineering Drawing. Each unit consisted of four language skills and a language focus section. It had two films. The films were taken from YouTube and they were to develop listening skills. The texts were also taken from authentic texts published freely in various websites. These texts were simplified so that they were not too long and complicated.

To motivate the students, the first film was to show the usefulness of the topic in civil engineering. This film had three to five multiple choice questions to check whether they could grasp the content and main ideas. This film was followed by a text; this was to introduce some technical or new words or

language points. The text and the exercises prepared the students for watching another film which was then followed with a close exercise. To complete this exercise, the students should listen many times. After these exercises, the language points exposed were discussed such as tenses, sentence patterns, etc.

After obtaining some language exposures from watching and reading, the students were given an example of a short conversation and they were encouraged to perform role plays in groups. Finally, writing skills were practiced by writing short texts.

During trying out these materials, evaluation by means of observation and informal discussion in the class was conducted. The results showed that using these materials had at least three positive and three negative points.

The first positive point was that the students learned new technical terms. Second, the short films motivated the students. They liked to have those films because they were able to learn those shapes and instruments. Third, students needed to watch the film several times to complete the exercises dealing with language focus such as grammar or new words.

The first negative points encountered was that it was time consuming because the students needed to see the films several times to complete the close exercises. The second one was the limited supporting equipment. For example, the classrooms did not have any projector and loud speakers or the electricity was off. It was time consu-

ming if the students should prepare these equipment. The third was the condition of the classroom which was too bright so that the film could not be watched clearly. To solve these problems, the lecturer should find a suitable classroom. In short, these materials might be difficult to be used in a traditional classroom without any projector and loud speakers.

The results of the evaluation showed that the materials tried out in Cycle 1 were in line with the students' wants or interests. The contents were useful for the students and the films could maintain the students' motivation. However, the learning activities were time consuming. The usefulness of the materials should be maintained and improved; and the problems needed to be solved.

**b) Results of Cycle 2: Integrating the materials to the main subjects**

Cycle 2 was conducted together with a civil engineering lecturer. This was to solve the problems encountered in Cycle 1, namely the problems of time consuming activities and the inadequate supporting equipment and condition of some classes. It was also to develop English materials so that they did not only motivate the students by providing English texts and topics based on the students' wants and interests, but also provided useful topics and contents, and meet the needs of the graduates.

To solve the problems encountered in Cycle 1, the materials were uploaded to e-learning program and the students were encouraged to watch them and finish the exercises in a certain period of time outside the

classroom (within two days). When the period was over, the exercises could not be accessed anymore.

The usefulness of the materials was improved by integrating the topics and contents with the first-semester main subjects of civil engineering department. The integration was carried out by comparing and selecting the main subjects of four study programs run by Civil Engineering department of Polban: Road and Bridge Engineering Technology, Building Engineering Technology, Civil Construction Technology, and Building Technology. The results showed that these study programs had four similar subjects namely Building Materials, Technical Drawing, Surveying, and Soil Mechanics. In addition, to motivate the students to study well at polytechnic, a topic concerning with being civil engineers, their concerns, and how to achieve this was added.

The goals and curriculum of English subject were determined by interpreting the levels of the graduates based on Indonesian Qualification Framework (IQF), namely level 5 for D-3 programs and level 6 for D-4 programs. The expected communication skills of civil engineering professionals were also interpreted from the body of knowledge stated in American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE).

Further, the thinking framework of professional civil engineers was also considered. This framework was "what the object is", "what the materials and devices needed", "how to make it", "what the standard is", and "how to evaluate it". Since the materials were used for the first semester

students, they mostly concerned with the first three parts of the thinking framework. The fourth and fifth were inserted in those parts. In addition, the topic about safety at work was also provided at the end of each chapter.

This framework was then applied to arrange the topics in a unit, and the units in a chapter, so that the sequence of films, and contents of texts including vocabulary learned were similar to this framework.

Considering the levels of language focus, the thinking framework of professional civil engineers, and the content levels, the topic sequence of the English materials was decided. The results were “Being Civil Engineers”, then it was followed with “Engineering Drawing”, “Building Materials”, “Surveying”, and “Soil Mechanics”.

The graduate profiles interpreted from IQF and ASCE indicated that the graduates should be able to describe objects, direct or give instructions, and present reports orally. In addition, they had to be able to fill forms, write memos, e-mails, simple reports, technical proposals, and reports on technical designs. These goals should be covered within two semesters. Then, it was decided that oral report presentation and writing technical proposal and reports would be presented in the second semester.

Having tried out the first two chapters, the response of the students indicated that the materials and the activities were enjoyable and unstressful. The students stated that the materials motivated and challenged them to learn the language seriously. The films made them understand the responsibilities and jobs of civil engineers. Completing the exercises made them watch and listen the films several times. The speaking activities allowed them to have a short conversation and present it in a group in front of the class. This developed their confidence.

The topics related to the students' main subjects and the authentic texts taken from various references including the civil engineering handbooks motivated the students to learn the contents and the language. The sequence of the units within a chapter made the students acquire the thinking framework of civil engineers.

The e-learning program allowed the students to access the film and the materials before the class. This encouraged them to learn the language outside the classroom by watching and listening them as much as they needed. As a result, the class had more time to practice speaking and writing skills. Finally, the students suggested that watching films and doing the exercises would be done before the class, and then the discussion in the class could only deal with the result of the exercises, the language focus, speaking and writing.

Since the students were able to access the Polban e-learning program, an additional activity called enrichment was added to each unit in the English materials. This activity was to encourage the students to explore other related topics of the unit from authentic texts and films from websites or other media. It was expected that these students would obtain more language exposure and enrich their content and language knowledge.

c) Discussion of ESP material characteristics

These ESP materials were developed because of limited English materials for civil engineering students and the mismatched expectations between the students and the English lecturers. These materials were designed not only to motivate the students by catering for the students' wants or interests, but also leading them to achieve their professional needs and autonomous language learning which in turn leading them to be autonomous persons. After evaluating the learning activities by means of two-cycle action research, these ESP materials could promote the students' language learning autonomy. These ESP materials developed the students' "willingness", motivation and confidence, and "ability", knowledge and skills [35] because they had at least seven characteristics.

First, it catered for the students' wants and interests by providing motivating and useful short films and speaking activities [35]. The films taken from free YouTube were motivating because the students would like to learn English by watching and listening films, and the film topics showed the students' future professional life. In addition, they were useful because the topics were dealing with students' main subjects. Each unit had integrated language skills, they did not only have speaking but also listening, reading and writing activities so that they covered all students' expectations [29][37].

Second, the topics of the reading texts were dealing with the students' main subjects. The technical words and language focus were mostly taken from the films and

reading texts. These led the students to learning and acquire the language naturally and in clear contexts [33][29].

Third, the students' confidence [35] was developed by means of providing authentic texts that were in line with their main subject's areas, although some of them were simplified. These texts were taken from websites and civil engineering handbooks. The long and complicated reading texts were simplified so that they were easy to understand and read naturally.

Fourth, the exercises facilitated the students dealing with language forms and remembered the contents of the films and texts [32]. These activities also enriched the students' knowledge, knowledge of the language and content areas [35]. In addition, the after-film and language focus exercises made the students listen several times so that this helped the students to learn and acquire the language [42].

Fifth, the materials were uploaded into the e-learning program. This e-learning program encouraged the students to access the materials anywhere and did the exercises at their own pace in unstressful environment. This activity promoted the students' learning autonomy, because this encouraged them to explore various resources via websites. This activity was also strengthen by allowing the students to explore various texts or YouTube related to the topics and their interests.

Sixth, these ESP materials led the students to achieve both national and international standard qualifications because they were developed in line with the students' profiles based on IQF

and ASCE. This improved the usefulness of these materials [29][37].

Seventh, another important point that made these ESP materials useful [29][37] was that they develop the students' thinking framework so that these students acquired the professional thinking processes. This improved the usefulness of these materials and led these students to become autonomous persons in the future.

As claimed by [35] that the framework of learning autonomy is the existence of "willingness", depending on motivation and confidence, and "ability", depending on knowledge and skills. The first characteristic of

these ESP materials had built up the motivation of the students. While the second and third could improve learners' motivation, confidence and knowledge from various resources [38]. Finally all characteristics including the objectives of these materials when used properly and appropriately could develop learners' skills and communication strategies. Using these ESP materials helped the lecturer give models and practices language learning autonomy to the students either inside or the class [21] so that these students moved from teacher-directed teaching to learner-directed learning [20].

## 5. Conclusion

By catering for the students' wants or interests, these ESP materials had developed the students' motivation and confidence. Using these materials, the students suggested to watch, listen, and did the exercises outside the class. These showed that they were willing to work hard and spent their time outside the class to learn and acquire the language [31]. These materials also helped the students improve their language and content knowledge. The four language skills and the assignments in each units developed the students' language skills and learning strategies.

Even though these ESP materials had promoted learner's language autonomy, the lecture's roles were still important. The lecturers should be flexible and working together with the students so that the environment could encourage the students to

take their initiative that led them to learn autonomously. The lecturer should allow the students to decide the parts that they could do by themselves and the parts that they needed help from the lecturer.

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# Student Voice in Digital Classrooms: The Use of Digital Tools for Continuous Student Feedback Collection

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**Abstract:** For the proposed paper we report on the use of diverse digital tools for continuous student feedback collection and discuss students' perceptions of and preferences for different approaches, with the aim of illustrating the influence of digital technologies on student voice. Five different digital tools have been investigated: TodaysMeet, Wiki, Padlet, Socrative, and WhatsApp. Eighty-eight non-English major freshmen from six randomly grouped classes at a Hong Kong university participated in the study. They were all enrolled in a credit-bearing course taught by one of the authors. After finishing all lectures of the course, we conducted a questionnaire survey among the participants, asking them what approach to feedback collection they felt most or least effective for communicating their feedback to teachers and classmates, which tool they felt most or least interesting, which tool they felt most or least convenient, and what advantages and disadvantages the five different digital tools have respectively. We also interviewed twenty participants to obtain further explanations of their answers to the questionnaires. The results showed that generally Padlet was regarded as the most liked and Wiki the least liked tool by the participants. Students highly valued features like effectiveness and interestingness, and considered convenience comparatively less important.

**Keywords:** Student voice, Continuous student feedback, Digital technologies, Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp, Wiki

## 1. Introduction

Student voice, an orthodoxy since 1990s, reforms education in respect to student participation and engagement in teaching and learning (Furlong & Davies, 2012). It emphasizes the importance of listening to students, understanding the social world of the classroom, perceiving the learning experience of different students and developing a classroom fit for students' needs and expectations (Arnot & Reay, 2004). With increasing focus on student voice in the community of researchers and educators, many studies have been conducted, topics of which include suggestions for implementing student voice practice (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Rudduck, 2006; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006; Pedder & McIntyre, 2006), the importance of student voice for research, education and professional practice (Mitra, 2004; Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; Mitsoni, 2006; Whitty & Wisby, 2007; Furlong & Davies, 2012), the role of student voice in the development of students' web 2.0 mentality (Palaigeorgiou, Triatafyllakos, & Tsinakos, 2009), and the impact of student voice on the conceptual change in students' views of science (Howitt & Wilson, 2014). It is widely acclaimed that when teaching contents are specifically designed to value student voice, and when learning environments are conducive to the involvement of students in educational contexts, students' improvement in academic performance is more likely to occur (Kouritzin & Vizard, 1999; Mitsoni, 2006; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

The rise of student voice work brings with it a growing awareness of students' ac-

tive involvement as feedback providers and material co-developers (Fielding, 2004; Stoler, Horn, Grabe, & Robinson, 2006; Kayi-Aydar, 2013). These practices, which empower students to voice their opinions and critique classroom activities (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002), facilitate the productive communication between teachers and students, and further contribute to better academic performance of students and professional development of teachers (Liew, 2010; Cho & Auger, 2013), as students are generally perspicacious and collaborative partners in education (Meighan, 1978; Rudduck, 2006). When process-oriented feedback is collected continuously, with students contributing to the educational processes (Currie, 1999) and teachers engaging in self-reflection (Kouritzin & Vizard, 1999; Farrell, 2011, 2013; Cabaroglu, 2014), effective teaching and learning is likely to occur (Kouritzin & Vizard, 1999) as personalized learning is more effective (Xie, Zou, Lau, Wang & Wong, 2016; Zou, Xie, Li, Wang & Chen, 2014).

Feedback, assuming various forms (Kouritzin & Vizard, 1999), is normally collected through paper-and-pen questionnaires or question-and-answer oral reports. With the pervasiveness of digital technologies in daily lives of the majority of young people, use of technology is also intrinsically bound up with innovation of education in respect to the contexts and means of learning (Furlong & Davies, 2012). In digital classrooms, tech-

nological devices have become indispensable educational tools like pens, papers or chalkboards (Liang, et al, 2005; Blake, 2013). They enable teachers to customize classroom learning for each student (Dede & Richards, 2012), and promote better learning and teaching (John & Wheeler, 2012).

Continuous student feedback collection is one essential part of student voice. Yet in the field of student voice, not many studies have been conducted to explore the influence of digital technologies on continuous student feedback collection. Considering the impact of digital technologies on education, it is of significance to investigate the effect of digital tools on student feedback collection (Zou, Xie, Wang & Wong, 2015; Zou, Xie, Wang,

Wong & Wu, 2017; Zou, Xie & Wang, 2016). Therefore, for the proposed paper we report on the use of diverse tools for continuous student feedback collection and discuss students' perceptions of and preferences for different approaches, with the aim of illustrating the influence of digital technologies on student voice. Here, we use the following three questions to guide our research:

- 1) What approach to feedback collection do students feel most effective?
- 2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of different digital tools such as Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp, and Wiki?
- 3) How do digital technologies influence continuous student feedback collection?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

Eighty-eight non-English major freshmen from six randomly grouped classes at a Hong Kong university participated in the study. They were all enrolled in a credit-

bearing course taught by one of the authors. As shown in Tab. 1, the numbers of participants in each group were separately 16, 19, 18, 18, and 17. The total numbers of female and male participants were 41 and 47.

Tab. 1 Allocation of participants

Group	Female	Male	Total
1	12	4	16
2	3	16	19
3	7	11	18
4	10	8	18
5	9	8	17
Sum	41	47	88

The participants aged from 17 to 20. Their first languages were Cantonese and

Mandarin, and they were all advanced English learners as they were awarded level 5 or

above in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination, an exam conducted by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. Level 5 in this exam is approximately equivalent to a 7.0 score for IELTS.

## 2.2 English course

The English course, in which the participants were enrolled, was an advanced level course about English for academic purposes. It aimed to help students study more effectively, and to improve and develop their English language proficiency levels. The whole course lasted for 13 weeks, one lecture each week. The collection of student feedback was integrated into the teaching of this course.

## 2.3 Feedback collection procedure

We explained the feedback collection project to the participants in week 1, and conducted feedback collection practices every week in the following 12 weeks. Students were encouraged to write whatever feedback they had throughout the whole lecture. The main purpose of this practice was to let students participate in the process of negotiating and deciding what and how to teach and learn via continuously collecting feedback from the students.

We adopted a student-centred approach to teaching (Baeten, Kyndt, Struyven & Dochy, 2010) and followed Howitt and Wilson's (2014) suggestions, involving students in classroom decisions according to their feedback. Students were encouraged to freely express their opinions on the class-

room management, teaching materials and activities from diverse aspects. They may comment on the suitability of the lesson content, the usefulness and levels of difficulty of the teaching materials, and the engagement of teaching activities. They may also ask questions, give suggestions, or report difficulties by using the digital tools. Some guided questions that aimed to prompt students' feedback on the teaching activities and materials are listed as follows:

- 1) Do you like the reading/ listening/ speaking/ writing material? Why or why not?
- 2) Is the panel debate/ mini-presentation/ group discussion practice useful for your preparation/ completion of the assignment? Why or why not?
- 3) Among all the activities that we have done today, which one do you like most/ least? Why or why not?
- 4) What do you want to do next week?
- 5) Do you think the preparation time for the speaking/ writing exercise sufficient?
- 6) What materials/ activities do you think could help enhance your English skills?

The main contents of a lesson were prepared before the classes, but minor revisions of the lesson plan such as the length of time for a specific task or the type of activity for a learning point, were made based on students' comments or feedback. If there were conflicting comments, the teacher followed the suggestions of the majority or made the decision based on her own teaching experience and knowledge. If many students were interested in one thing, the teacher normally addressed this issue for the whole

class orally or by making an additional PowerPoint slide; if only one student was interested in a comment, the teacher typed her response to the student through the digital tools or wrote it on the white board which was on the side wall of the classroom. The teacher checked the feedback when students were doing reading tasks, group discussions, or any other activities.

During each lecture, the teacher also kept observation journal entries to record what happened in the classroom, with focuses on whether and when students enjoyed or proactively participated in the classroom activities.

## 2.4 Feedback collection tools

Five digital tools were used to collect students' feedback: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp, and Wiki. Padlet is an online platform where students can post and share anything with others, for example, text, images, videos, and other documents. It works like a sheet of paper, and is one of the most popular tools used for education (Padlet, 2016).

Socrative is a tool which allows teachers to instantly connect with students through prepared activities or on-the-fly questions. It was selected because it was designed to collect instant feedback, and it enables reviews of students' understanding in a variety of report types; whole class overview, student-specific results, or question-by-question breakdown (Socrative, 2016).

TodaysMeet empowers students by giving everyone the floor. It was selected be-

cause it is free to use, and it encourages students to voice their opinions through the backchannel. It is also one of the first backchannel tools built specifically for classroom use (TodaysMeet, 2016).

WhatsApp allows users to send text, images, video and audio messages to others using smart phones. WhatsApp group makes it easy for users to share information within the same group. And it was selected because it is one of the most popular tools used among students.

A Wiki is a collaborative tool that allows users to create and edit Wiki pages. Students can add, edit, delete, and comment on content. It was selected because it is integrated in the Blackboard, the official digital platform used by the university.

To maintain similar usage frequencies for the feedback collection methods among the five student groups, the five digital tools were rotated every five weeks. Each tool was used twice by every group throughout the semester. For example, Group 1 used Padlet in week 2, Socrative in week 3, TodaysMeet in week 4, WhatsApp in week 5, and Wiki in week 6. As shown in Tab. 2, the feedback collection project was explained to the participants in week 1. Explicit details about the content, purpose, method, procedure and schedule of this project were explained to the participants. No feedback was collected in week 7 and 13, as week 7 was scheduled for consultation, and a questionnaire survey was conducted in week 13 to investigate students' perceptions of and preferences for different feedback collection tools.

Tab. 2 Distribution of feedback tools

	G1	G2	G3	G4	G5
Week 1	The project (what, why, how, when)				
Week 2	P	S	T	Wh	Wi
Week 3	S	T	Wh	Wi	P
Week 4	T	Wh	Wi	P	S
Week 5	Wh	Wi	P	S	T
Week 6	Wi	P	S	T	Wh
Week 7					
Week 8	P	S	T	Wh	Wi
Week 9	S	T	Wh	Wi	P
Week 10	T	Wh	Wi	P	S
Week 11	Wh	Wi	P	S	T
Week 12	Wi	P	S	T	Wh
Week 13	Questionnaire survey				

Note: G stands for group; P stands for Padlet; S stands for Socrative; T stands for TodaysMeet, Wh stands for WhatsApp; Wi stands for Wiki.

## 2.5 Evaluation of the feedback collection tools

After completing the whole course, we conducted a questionnaire survey among all participants, asking them what approach to feedback collection they felt most or least effective for communicating their feedback to teachers and classmates, which tool they felt most or least interesting, which tool they felt most or least convenient, and what advantages and disadvantages the five different digital tools have respectively. The questions were all open-ended so as to allow students to freely respond without predetermined prompting. The eighteen questions, which were adapted from Zou and Lambert(2017) were listed as follows:

1) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is most effective for communicating your feedback to teachers and classmates? (Please circle it.)

2) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is least effective for communicating your feedback to teachers and classmates? (Please circle it.)

3) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is most interesting? (Please circle it.)

4) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is least interesting? (Please circle it.)

5) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is most convenient? (Please circle it.)

6) Among the five digital tools: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki, which do you think is least convenient? (Please circle it.)

7) Overall, which digital tool do you like most? Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki (Please circle it.)

8) Overall, which digital tool do you like least? Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki (Please circle it.)

9) Are there any advantages of Padlet?  
If yes, what are they?

10) Are there any disadvantages of Padlet? If yes, what are they?

11) Are there any advantages of Socrative? If yes, what are they?

12) Are there any disadvantages of Socrative? If yes, what are they?

13) Are there any advantages of Today'sMeet? If yes, what are they?

14) Are there any disadvantages of Today'sMeet? If yes, what are they?

15) Are there any advantages of WhatsApp? If yes, what are they?

16) Are there any disadvantages of WhatsApp? If yes, what are they?

17) Are there any advantages of Wiki? If yes, what are they?

18) Are there any disadvantages of wiki? If yes, what are they?

In addition to the questionnaire survey, we also interviewed 20 participants to obtain further explanations of their answers to the questionnaires and their additional comments on the five digital tools.

## 2.6 Coding and analysis of the data

All students' feedback from the five digital

platforms, their questionnaire answers and interview transcripts were logged and kept for analysis. Specifically, the data were coded and analyzed in the following ways.

Firstly, students' answers to the questionnaire of their opinions about the feedback collection tools were read carefully to calculate the percentages of the students who found which methods most effective, and to summarize the key advantages and disadvantages of the five methods as noted by the students.

The open ended feedback collected from students were then skimmed thoroughly to find supporting evidence for the advantages and disadvantages noted by students in their answers to the questionnaire. After obtaining a holistic view, the data were read carefully once again to identify any special features of these feedback collection methods that were indicated by repetitive notions or students' interactions. These evidence and highlighted features were analyzed later together to see how they may explain or supplement the advantages and disadvantages of different feedback collection methods.

## 3. Results and discussion

Results of the present research are presented and discussed in this section from three perspectives: students' comments on the five digital tools, the main advantages and disadvantages of the tools, and the influence of digital tools on continuous student

feedback collection.

### 3.1 Students' comments on the five digital tools

The data collected from the end of course questionnaire survey showed that 43

out of 88(48.9%) participants believed that Padlet was the most effective for communicating feedback to teachers and classmates, 39 participants(44.3%) felt that it was the most interesting approach to feedback collection, and 48 participants(54.5%) liked it most(see Tab. 3 below).

29 participants (32.9%) considered Socrative the most effective for feedback collection, but 14 participants(15.9%) felt it least effective. Similarly, TodaysMeet was regarded as the most effective by 11 participants(12.5%) and the least effective by 9 participants(10.2%).

From the perspective of interestingness, the majority of participants, 75 out of 88(85.2%), marked Wiki as the least interesting approach to feedback collection. Yet 39 participants(44.3%) felt Padlet the most interesting one, and 35 participants(39.8%) thought TodaysMeet the most interesting.

Interestingly, although WhatsApp was

regarded as the most convenient tool for feedback collection by 98% of participants, only two participants liked it most. Perhaps this is because the majority of participants (85.2%) considered it least interesting, and 97% of participants felt it least convenient. Also, more than half participants (54.5%) noted Padlet as the most liked approach to feedback collection, even if it was comparatively inconvenient to use. Therefore, it seems that convenience is not the most important feature for feedback collection tools from students' viewpoint.

Additionally, 36 participants (40.9%) felt that Wiki was the least effective for providing feedback, and 99% of participants marked it as the least liked approach. Such results tend to show that students considered the effectiveness for communicating feedback with teachers and classmates as the most important feature for feedback collection tools.

Tab. 3 Students' comments on the five digital tools

	P	S	T	Wh	Wi
Most effective	43 48.9%	29 32.9%	11 12.5%	4 4.5%	1 1%
Least effective	3 3.4%	14 15.9%	9 10.2%	26 29.5%	36 40.9%
Most interesting	39 44.3%	4 4.5%	35 39.8%	10 11.4%	0 0%
Least interesting	0 0%	8 9%	2 2.2%	3 3.4%	75 85.2%
Most convenient	0 0%	1 1%	1 1%	86 98%	0 0%
Least convenient	1 1%	1 1%	1 1%	0 0%	85 97%
Most liked	48 54.5%	9 10.2%	29 32.9%	2 2.2%	0 0%
Least liked	0 0%	0 0%	0 0%	1 1%	87 99%

Note: P stands for Padlet; S stands for Socrative; T stands for TodaysMeet, Wh stands for WhatsApp; Wi stands for Wiki.

### 3.2 Main advantages and disadvantages of the five digital tools

The results of the main advantages and disadvantages of the five digital tools showed that, on the one hand, the main advantages of Padlet included allowing students to read other classmates' feedback, being easy to use, and having a record of all feedback given by every student. On the other hand, the main disadvantage of Padlet was inconvenience. A summary of these features is presented in the following Tab. 4. According to students' questionnaire answers, the main advantages and disadvantages of Today'sMeet were the same as those of Padlet. Such features played essential roles as many participants reported in the interviews that other classmates' feedback was very helpful for their reflective thinking and facilitative for their language learning. So they highly valued digital tools that enabled them to read others' feedback.

Socrative was also easy to use and had a record of feedback, but students could not

read other classmates' feedback, so the overall comments on Socrative were not as high as those on Padlet and Today'sMeet. 48 participants (54.5%) liked Padlet most, 29 participants (32.9%) liked Today'sMeet most, and only nine participants (10.2%) liked Socrative most (Tab. 3).

WhatsApp was convenient and easy to use. It also enabled students to read other classmates' feedback and provided a record of feedback, however, only two participants (2.2%) liked it most. The main reason for this might be that WhatsApp did not allow students to provide anonymous feedback. Many participants noted in the interview that they felt uncomfortable when teachers knew what comments and feedback were given by them.

Being the least liked digital tool, Wiki was categorized as inconvenient to use, not anonymous, and not enabling users to read others' feedback. The only advantage of it was that it kept a record of feedback for students to refer back when necessary.

**Tab. 4 Main advantages and disadvantages of the five digital tools**

Digital tools	Advantages	Disadvantages
P	Can read others' feedback	Inconvenient
	Easy to use	
	Have a record of feedback	
S	Easy to use	Cannot read others' feedback
	Have a record of feedback	Inconvenient
T	Can read others' feedback	Inconvenient
	Easy to use	
	Have a record of feedback	
Wh	Convenient	Not anonymous
	Easy to use	
	Can read others' feedback	
	Have a record of feedback	
Wi	Have a record of feedback	Inconvenient
		Not anonymous
		Cannot read others' feedback

Note: P stands for Padlet; S stands for Socrative; T stands for Today'sMeet, Wh stands for WhatsApp; Wi stands for Wiki.

### 3.3 Influence of digital tools on continuous student feedback collection

The overall influence of digital technologies on continuous student feedback collection was quite positive. Most participants went beyond providing feedback and used the online platforms to share their learning experience and feelings, supporting evidence of which can be found from both the feedback given by students and the transcripts of some participants' interviews.

The results were also in accordance with Fielding's (2004) belief that the promise of a dialogic model of student voice is essential for successful education. The use of digital tools promoted dialogical student voice through backchannel. Backchannel changed the dynamics of a traditional classroom to a digital classroom where students and teachers can communicate through multiple channels, modes and interactions without disrupting the main channel communication (Ross, et al., 2011). We also found that backchanneling enhanced the communication between students and teachers, and students and students, as it enabled students to express themselves through asking questions, giving comments, and providing suggestions without interrupting the front channel. In other words, students can give feedback to teachers and other classmates in various ways, without being restricted to the traditional approaches like raising hands and speaking it out aloud during the class, or writing it on a piece of paper after the class.

Traditional approaches were limited as

students may hesitate to voice themselves in front of the whole class because they were uncertain whether their comments, suggestions, or questions were appropriate or relevant. Also, they may be unwilling to give negative but constructive feedback to teachers as they were afraid that this may influence their academic grades, or they were uncomfortable of challenging teachers. As a result, teachers may not get helpful feedback and suggestions for their further professional development.

Moreover, our results showed that the use of digital tools for continuous feedback collection increased students' engagement in classroom activities. This finding further supports Elavsky, Mislan and Eglevsky's (2011) argument that students who participate in digital backchanneling were more involved in the learning process.

However, one limitation of feedback collection via digital technological tools was reflected through open arguments about contradictory feedback. On the one hand, digital platforms are advantageous in respect to its features like dialogic nature and multi-interactions; on the other hand, these advantages are likely to result in free expressions of opposite expectations, conflicting requests or inconsistent arguments. Take an extract of students' dialogic feedback as an example. Some students complained that "Peer conferencing sucks." or required that "No peer conferencing please." or "I don't believe in my classmates. They know nothing. I want professional feedback from the teacher." Yet some students argued that "Peer conferencing helps us notice common er-

rors." or "It's good that we can learn from each other." Then, the challenges for teachers were to reconcile these apparently opposing demands and to decide to what extent

should we let students determine the teaching contents. These may also be promising directions for future research.

## 4. Conclusion

The present research aimed to investigate student perceptions of five digital tools for continuous student feedback collection: Padlet, Socrative, TodaysMeet, WhatsApp and Wiki. The majority of students believed that Padlet was the most effective for communicating feedback to teachers and classmates. The advantages of Padlet, allowing students to read others' feedback, being easy to use and having a record of feedback, were basically the same as those of TodaysMeet. And TodaysMeet was noted as the second most liked feedback collection tool by the participants. Wiki was the least liked tool as it was inconvenient, did not allow students to read others' feedback or give feedback anonymously.

The results also showed that students highly valued features like effectiveness in communicating one's feedback to others and interestingness, while convenience was not so important comparatively. The original concern that feedback collection might be disruptive and negatively influence the teaching and learning also disappeared very quickly, as all participants showed great interest in providing feedback and learning from the process of giving feedback. Many students also noted that this practice was good for their reflective learning.

However, this study was limited in

some respects. As the five tools were only used twice by the participants, they may not have a through and comprehensive understanding of different approaches. Also, the time span was too short, and the number of participants was quite small.

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# Autonomy in Foreign and Second Language Teaching: Case Studies of Novice English Teachers in Shenzhen and Hong Kong

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**Abstract:** Novice teachers are often eager to embark on their journey in the teaching profession after years of teacher education, ready to actualize their educational ideals. Some head towards a smooth start while others encounter a wide range of constraints during their initial years of teaching. Drawing on narrative interviews with a number of novice English teachers in Shenzhen and Hong Kong for at least one academic year and other data sources such as their EFL learning autobiographies and school documents, this paper examines and compares (1) the opportunities and constraints these teachers face in their initial years of teaching and (2) their responses to the perceived opportunities and constraints in their attempts to take control of their teaching, in two different socio-cultural and educational contexts of Shenzhen and Hong Kong. This paper highlights how possibilities for and constraints on teacher autonomy are mediated by teacher agency, teacher identity and teacher beliefs. It also sheds light on how novice teachers can be afforded more opportunities in their struggle to become autonomous practitioners.

**Keywords:** Novice teachers, Teacher autonomy, Teacher agency, Affordances, Teacher professional development

## Introduction

First-year teaching is both exciting and challenging. While novice teachers are passionate about starting their career, first-year teaching also presents some of the toughest challenges in their career path. In particular, they are likely to find a huge gap between what they learn in their pre-service teacher education and what the reality of school teaching is. They encounter and respond to a range of opportunities and challenges in learning to take control of their teaching. Based in the foreign and second language teaching context, this study sets out to ex-

amine these opportunities and constraints faced by novice secondary school English teachers in Hong Kong, a renowned international city, and Shenzhen, an economically leading city in mainland China, and how these novice teachers respond to these possibilities and constraints in developing themselves as autonomous teachers. This investigation highlights how differences embedded in the educational, social, political and cultural contexts of these two neighbouring cities affect initial teaching and novice teacher development.

## Literature review

### Autonomy and agency

In a broad sense, autonomy concerns defining and exploring personal meanings and purposes (Huang, 2006). With self-directedness central to autonomy, teacher autonomy is defined as “teachers’ willingness, capacity and freedom to take control of their own teaching and learning” in the education setting (Huang, 2005, p. 206). Viewed from another angle, autonomy is about the right to freedom from control or, in other words, the capacity to create such freedom within prevailing constraints (Benson, 2010; Benson & Huang, 2008; Smith, 2003).

The emphasis on the right to freedom from control relates autonomy to agency, conceptualised as “the capacity to act otherwise” (Giddens, 1976, p. 75). More recently, agency has been viewed as “the self-con-

scious reflexive actions of human being” (Sealy & Carter, 2004, iii). It is related to how individuals “assign relevance and significance to things and events” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 143). In the words of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), agency reflects “the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations” (p. 971). As such, agency entails action, and often suggests action that arises from deliberation and choice (Huang, 2011; 2013). Agency enables us to counter societal constraints and understands “how individuals are enabled and constrained by their social and material environments” (Priestley, Biesta & Robinson, 2013). In other words, agency and structure are interdependent and they shape each other (Archer, 2003; Biestra & Tedder, 2007). Agency is therefore sociocul-

turally mediated (Ahearn, 2001; Pickering, 1995). In the words of Lantolf and Thorne (2006), “within a given time and space, there are constraints and affordances that make certain actions probable, others possible, and yet others impossible”(p. 238).

### Constraints on and opportunities for teacher autonomy

To novices teachers, teaching could be

stressful and overwhelming (Bullough, Young, Hall, Draper & Smith, 2008). Research shows that the first year is often the most challenging year in a teacher’s career (Fantilli & McDougall, 2009). Benson’s (2012) model below(Fig. 1)captures the major constraints on teacher autonomy at different levels.

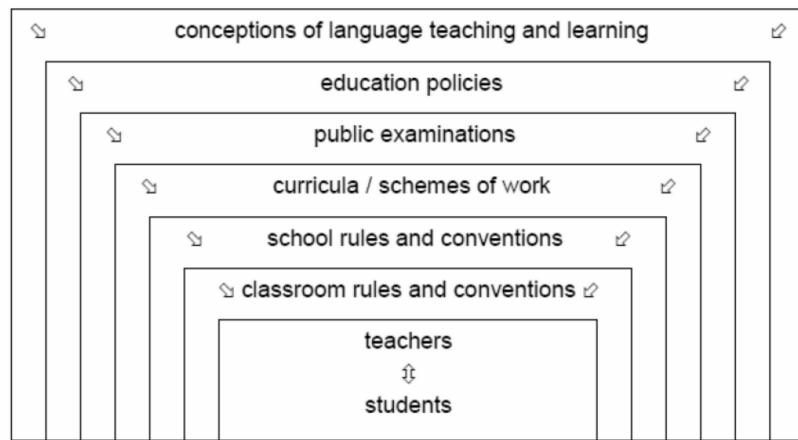


Fig. 1 Constraints on teacher autonomy

From the societal to institutional to personal level, the arrows show that all the constraints pose an impact on the classroom, the innermost layer. With the layers representing their relative distance from the classroom, the latter bears the greatest weight of constraint. Earlier, Benson(2010) suggests that teachers’ conceptions of the target language and their language teaching methodologies may influence language teachers’ autonomy when they are not willing to experiment with new possibilities which contradict their conceptions and beliefs. As far as constraints imposed by the institutional structure are concerned, Pinter (2007) adds that time is a major constraint since teachers burdened with heavy work-

load are left with limited time for professional development. Aoki(2002) asserts that teachers’ working conditions and their spaces for participation in institutional decision making may encourage them to conform rather than transform.

Constraints may imply opportunities, which are created out of existing constraints. In this sense, autonomy concerns how teachers get around constraints and take advantage of the opportunities their institutional structures afford them. With the range of affordances offered by the workplace well-studied(see Billett, 1999; Cotterall & Murray,2009),Billett(2001)remarked upon the role of agency in mediating what constitutes an affordance to individual teach-

ers. Billett's (2001) study also reveals that the quality of workplace learning is largely determined by the readiness of the work-

place in affording opportunities to individuals for professional development.

## Methodology

This study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What opportunities and constraints do novice English teachers in Hong Kong and Shenzhen perceive in their initial years of teaching?
2. How do they respond to these perceived opportunities and constraints?

This is a qualitative study. A qualitative design aims to "develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). The central phenomenon of this study is how novice English teachers in Shenzhen and Hong Kong take control of their initial years of teaching through taking advantage of opportunities and overcoming constraints. Through interviews at different time points, our participants' development of teacher autonomy during their initial years of teaching was tracked.

Seven novice English teachers were invited to take part in this study, three from Shenzhen and the others from Hong Kong. Pansy, Queenie and Dorcas came from a student-teacher population in a BA TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) degree programme in a university in Shenzhen and they worked in Shenzhen schools after graduation. Simon, Sally, Stella and Courtney were fresh graduates from a BA & BEd degree programme in ELT (English Language Teaching) in a university in Hong

Kong and they were teaching in local schools. They all had no more than two years of teaching experience when the study was conducted. They were articulate and willing to share their teaching lives with the researchers. The sampling size was kept small since "the overall ability of a researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual or site" (Creswell, 2012, p. 209).

Data for the study was collected mainly through semi-structured face-to-face individual or group interviews, each lasting one to two hours. Interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2014, with the first interview for each participant conducted shortly before they started teaching. Each of them was followed for at least one academic year following the start of their teaching career. Subsequent interviews were arranged depending on their availability. Open-ended questions were asked during the interviews to "create the option of responding... without being forced into research possibilities" (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). A brief summary of all interviews can be found in the Appendix. Data was also collected through email exchanges and telephone conversations from time to time, especially when face-to-face interviews were hard to arrange. Some participants also provided their personal and school documents such as teaching journals

(Shenzhen teachers) and Schemes of Work (Hong Kong teachers). Information obtained through these channels enriched the interview data by providing a more complete picture of our participants' initial years of teaching.

Qualitative data analysis involves an

"inductive investigative strategy" (Merriam, 2009, p. 39). The interviews were transcribed, coded thematically, and compared against the data from other sources to ensure consistency. Emerging themes from the data were then identified and discussed with reference to the research questions.

## Findings and discussion

This section presents and briefly discusses major findings, in relation to the two research questions. Given space constraints, only brief remarks (singular sentences) by the research participants rather than longer data extracts are quoted to illustrate the major themes.

### Perceived opportunities and constraints

The Shenzhen participants were satisfied with their salary and working conditions. They were aware that they earned much more than most of primary or secondary teachers in other parts of China. They considered their workload manageable, and more importantly, most of their workload was teaching-related. They were each in charge of two junior secondary English classes, equating to 10-12 regular lesson hours weekly. Their manageable workload afforded them the opportunity to prepare their lessons well. Queenie was also a class teacher, so she handled some class business as well. She struggled to take control of her class at first. Despite some initial frustration, she took that as an opportunity to develop a stern image in front of her students. After her first year, she felt more confident in being a class teacher with the experience

she gained.

In Shenzhen, rivalry among teachers for students' academic results was found to be common. Some schools where our participants worked had the academic performance of each class posted regularly so teachers knew which classes did well and which did poorly. This practice, intended to promote academic excellence, received mixed responses from our participants. While Dorcas said it motivated her to learn from colleagues who produced high-achievers, others remarked upon the pressure this practice posed on teachers. Queenie devoted a lot of effort in improving the performance of her classes, which ranked at the bottom in the first term. "It's a matter of face", Queenie noted (3rd interview, 2nd term, 1st year teaching). Such rivalry impacted on teacher identity as our participants regarded the ranking as an indicator of their teaching effectiveness.

The institutional structure of the Shenzhen schools our participants worked in was not found to be systematic in the sense that there were not a lot of rigid, formally established rules in place. This was particularly the case for Pansy, who worked in a

newly established school. Pansy considered the lack of established institutional systems both an opportunity and a constraint. On the one hand, that afforded her the opportunity to experiment with a range of pedagogies to facilitate teaching and learning. On the other hand, the need for trial and error made her feel anxious. Her hectic teaching life also made it impossible for her to get in touch with her mentor until after the mid-term examination, which made her feel isolated.

The inadequate pre-service teacher education emerged from the data as a prominent factor influencing their autonomy development. In Shenzhen, pre-service teachers spend the first 2-3 years in university studying English (enrolling in proficiency courses). Courses on pedagogies and a one-off, six-week practicum were only included in the latter part of their four-year programme. This resulted in our Shenzhen participants' perceived inability in teaching, including a limited repertoire of methodologies and a lack of classroom management skills. "The students are so hard to handle that I feel like battling with them every day", Pansy remarked (2nd interview, 1st term, 1st year teaching). This partly explained why many of them were dissatisfied with their initial months of teaching.

The socio-institutional setting in Hong Kong is quite different from that of Shenzhen, and this situational difference gave rise to a different set of perceived possibilities for action and constraints on teaching and professional (and personal) development. First, pre-service teacher education in Hong Kong was found to be more systematic and

comprehensive, with greater emphasis on pedagogies. Also, pre-service teachers in Hong Kong have two practicums, each lasting six to eight weeks. Our Hong Kong participants generally felt that their pre-service teacher education programme has adequately prepared them to teach by exposing them to a wide range of teaching methods and by raising their awareness towards the context-specific nature of teaching.

A major hindrance on our Hong Kong participants' teacher autonomy concerns their heavy workload. All four of them taught at least three English classes with more than 20 lesson hours a week. Unlike our Shenzhen participants, the Hong Kong teachers we interviewed were also in charge of much more non-teaching duties. For example, Courtney was part of the Parent-Teacher Association while Sally was the teacher-in-charge for her school's rope skipping team. Their busy teaching lives have led to very limited lesson preparation time and caused them to think that teaching was stressful and demanding. In Stella's words, "sometimes, even when I don't need to work, I am still worried about my students and sometimes I can't sleep because of that" (2nd interview, 2nd semester, 1st year teaching). Feelings and experiences like these contributed to her negative perception towards teaching, which partly accounted for their intention to leave the educational industry.

From the data we also observed traces of consumerism in the Hong Kong education system, which were perceived as a challenge to teacher autonomy. Such a market orienta-

tion was manifested in students' learning attitudes. Stella, for example, noted that some of her students "are used to receiving teachers' assistance ... and they take it for granted" (2nd interview, 2nd term, 1st year teaching). Sally reported a similar problem, which made her feel not appreciated by her students. Eventually, their inability to handle their students shaped these novices' identity as incapable, unsuccessful teachers.

While our participants focused on institutional factors that facilitated and hindered their autonomy development, our data highlights how the perception of affordances and constraints are mediated by teachers' own agency, identity and beliefs. In other words, affordances and constraints are not absolute. Often, a factor may constitute both an affordance and a constraint, the perception of which is largely dependent on how they are viewed, and such views are often constructed socioculturally, particularly in relation to the prevailing institutional structure. Our observation, therefore, supports Billet's (2001) remark on the mediating role of agency on perception of affordances and constraints.

#### **Responding to perceived opportunities and constraints**

Our participants took initiatives in making use of existing opportunities and overcoming constraints by creating spaces for autonomous teaching. As far as our Shenzhen participants were concerned, they made up for their inadequacy in pre-service teacher education by developing a passion and clear goals for workplace learning. Pansy wanted to brush up her classroom manage-

ment skills by volunteering to be a class teacher the following school year. Queenie felt that she had not improved her teaching a lot during her first year. She therefore decided to spend the summer holiday reviewing her materials and doing more detailed planning for her teaching. Dorcas started teaching half way through the academic year after working as an administrative staff in her school because of her late employment. She therefore perceived an urgent need to pick up teaching. Her situation was made more challenging since she, unlike Pansy and Queenie, did not receive any teacher induction organised by the local Education Bureau and her school and did not have a mentor.

Shenzhen teachers' satisfaction with a "decent salary" and a favourable working environment strengthened their motivation for teaching (as indicated by their often-heard remarks such as "we should contribute to educating the younger generation"), while their manageable workload afforded them ample chances for workplace learning (Billet, 2001). All three of them were passionate towards mandatory and voluntary lesson observation. They all said that they had learned tremendously from observing public lessons (公开课) taught by other novice peers and expert teachers; they often used words such as "rapid growth" ("快速成长") to describe the "unforgettable" process of preparing and teaching such public lessons themselves. This experience was "unforgettable" because they were so engaged in finding solutions to practical problems often with the help of the English team who monitored the whole preparation process lasting a few

weeks that they eventually lost a lot of weigh at the end of offering a public lesson. In addition, Shenzhen teachers made use of the spaces afforded by the loose institutional structure to promote their professional competence and thus professional autonomy (Benson & Huang, 2008) by regularly observing and interacting with colleagues, experimenting with a range of pedagogies to improve teaching and learning, and reading extensively to enrich subject knowledge and skills. Our Shenzhen participants were also found to have well-articulated plans for further studies. All three of them expressed a desire to pursue a Master's degree, though a range of practical concerns made that impossible in the near future, including a requirement by the local authority that teachers need to accumulate three years of teaching experience before getting enrolled in a Master's degree programme.

The rivalry among colleagues reported in their school environments led to fierce competition among teachers and an inclination towards result-oriented teaching. Queenie, for example, had a detailed plan to push her classes to perform better: She identified the group of students within each class to target on and adopted strategies to upgrade their examination scores. Thanks to her efforts, her classes were eventually upgraded to among the top five by the end of the second term of her first-year teaching from the original bottom position (11-12th out of 14 classes) in the first term.

Despite occasional frustration, our Shenzhen participants remained positive about teaching in face of the constraints they

perceived. "You just have to be down-to-earth, try your best and be humble", Queenie remarked (6th interview, 2nd term, 2nd year teaching).

Our Hong Kong participants also developed strategies in response to the opportunities and constraints they perceived. Firstly, compared with Shenzhen teachers, their relatively higher English proficiency and the greater repertoire of pedagogies they were exposed to in university laid a solid foundation for them to take control of their teaching. Coupled with the less exam-oriented culture and the spaces their institutional structures offered them, they made fuller use of the pedagogies they acquired in the pre-service teacher education programme to pursue what they termed "teaching effectiveness". Simon, for example, successfully made English learning interesting by designing engaging task-based activities. Courtney tried to cultivate her students' interest in language arts by getting them to appreciate performing arts. These attempts were indicative of our participants making use of existing opportunities in creating spaces for teacher autonomy.

Our Hong Kong participants have developed vastly different strategies in countering the heavy workload and the lack of lesson preparation time. Simon and Sally actively sought advice from their colleagues and mentors. Courtney failed to solicit such help, so she attempted to develop her capacity to multitask and self-learn in order to cope with her workload. After all, "you are paid for your own job" (Courtney, 2nd interview, 1st year teaching).

All in all, our data reveals that our participants were able to exercise their individual agency to gain a sense of control over their teaching. They were able to capitalise on the opportunities their institutional structures afforded them. Equally important, they attempted with some success in overcoming the constraints they encountered, asserting their right to freedom from situational control. Therefore, our findings seem to support the mediating role of sociocultural factors on agency (Ahern, 2001; Pickering, 1995) and the interdependence (and complex interaction) between agency and structure (Priestley, et al., 2013).

One intriguing observation is that our Shenzhen participants were all eager to stay on teaching while their Hong Kong counterparts all expressed a desire to leave the profession at some point during their initial year of teaching. This might be partly attributable to Shenzhen participants' satisfaction with economic benefits and favourable working conditions, the development of a sense of being in control over their teach-

ing, and their inadequate pre-service teaching education which might give rise to an acceptance of a relatively humble start of their teaching career. They therefore had a strong motivation to be empowered by the institutional structure, which afforded them the exercise of personal agency. This contributed to the formation of a positive teacher identity and further consolidated their willingness to stay on teaching. In contrast, the intention of our Hong Kong participants to leave the industry might be a result of their unexpectedly hectic teaching lives, which involved non-teaching duties one way or another, and also a result of the accumulated sense of not being appreciated by their students. All these might have eroded their passion to be a teacher to some extent. The relatively bad working environment, the perceived lower status of Hong Kong teachers in recent years, coupled with simultaneously greater availability of other promising jobs, and so on and so forth, might also explain why novice teachers in Hong Kong would consider dropping out when given a choice.

## Conclusion and implications

This study shows that novice English teachers in Shenzhen and Hong Kong are enthusiastic in creating spaces for autonomous teaching through taking advantage of existing opportunities (e. g., for Shenzhen teachers, observing-preparing-teaching public lessons, manageable workload and greater freedom to experiment with desired pedagogies; for Hong Kong participants, being

more "ready-made" for their first-year teaching). Shenzhen and Hong Kong teachers carefully employ a range of strategies to cope with various difficulties and constraints in their teaching (e. g., inadequate pre-service teacher education for Shenzhen participants; heavy workload and consumerism school culture for Hong Kong teachers) in their respective settings. This study high-

lights the mediating role of teacher agency, teacher identity and teacher beliefs in the participants' perceptions/conceptualizations of and responses to opportunities for and constraints on teacher autonomy. The study indicates that among various constraints, novices' workload (as well as the nature of assigned teacher work) is an obvious obstacle to the exercise and development of teacher autonomy. Heavy workload drains teachers and compromises their capacity to create space for professional development, especially when substantial non-teaching duties are involved. In this connection, it is proposed that schools in both places should reconsider the roles of novice teachers so that they can focus on what they are supposed to do. It is only when teachers find value in what they do can they develop themselves professionally in the educational industry.

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**Appendix: A brief summary of face-to-face interviews**

	Participant: Date	Interviews
Shenzhen teachers	Pansy: May 2011-June 2012	1. 19 May 2011 (2nd semester, 4 <sup>th</sup> year in university) 2. 11 December 2011 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 3. 26 February 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 4. 21 April 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 5. 16 June 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)
	Queenie: May 2012-July 2014	1. 25 May 2012 (2nd semester, 4 <sup>th</sup> year in university) 2. 14 October 2012 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 3. 18 November 2012 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 4. 1 March 2013 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 5. 22 August 2013 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 6. 12 July 2014 (2nd semester, 2nd year teaching)
	Dorcas: March 2012-August 2012	1. 19 May 2011 (2nd semester, 4 <sup>th</sup> year in university) 2. 17 March 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 3. 16 August 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)

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Hong Kong teachers	Dorcas: March 2012-August 2012	1. 19 May 2011 (2nd semester, 4th year in university) 2. 17 March 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching) 3. 16 August 2012 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)
	Simon: November 2012-February 2013	1. 11 November 2012 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 2. 6 February 2013 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)
	Sally: August 2013-January 2014	1. 31 August 2013 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 2. 13 October 2013 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 1. 25 January 2014 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)
	Stella: August 2013-January 2014	1. 31 August 2013 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 2. 14 January 2014 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)
	Courtney: August 2013-January 2014	1. 31 August 2013 (1st semester, 1st year teaching) 2. 16 January 2014 (2nd semester, 1st year teaching)

# Chinese Students' Perspectives on the Role of Language Learning Advisors in Fostering Learner Autonomy in a UK University

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**Abstract:** As language learning advisors become familiar figures in self-access centers, their role in language learner autonomy (LLA) has attracted various researchers' attention. However, higher education students travelling abroad to study are less likely to be familiar with advisors, especially if they are from a country where language advisory service is uncommon, such as in China. Nonetheless, we know very little about what these students think about advisors. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the perspectives these students may have on the role of advisors, enabling their learning needs to be better recognised and supported. This case study involves 120 masters' students originally from mainland China on a pre-sessional course at a research institute in the UK, as well as students at the end of their one-year study, employing questionnaires and interviews to collect data. The results show that before the course, over 80% of the students reckon advisors are monitors to supervise them or advisors are teachers to teach them. However, throughout the course, the students gradually realize advisors play complex roles in developing students' learner autonomy. Additionally, during the first week on the course, 62% of the students perceive learner autonomy as "*to study by oneself, without others' help*". Nevertheless, at the end of their one-year study, 75% of them perceive learner autonomy as "*the attitudes and abilities toward life-long learning*". Overall, the findings indicate that the Chinese students' transition to the British academic culture deepens their perceptions of learner autonomy, and bridges their gap between theory and practice of learner autonomy, but also helps them gain understanding of the complex nature of the advisor roles.

**Keywords:** Academic culture, Chinese international students, Higher education, Language learner autonomy, Language advising, Students' perspectives

## 1. Introduction

An increasing interest in fostering language learner autonomy (LLA) has led to the widespread of language-advisory service at the tertiary level around the world [1]. Normally, language advising consists of a meeting between a student and an advisor to recognize this student's learning needs, develop a learning plan, discuss learning strategies etc., aiming to guide this student's own path to become a more autonomous learner [2,3]. In this case, the role of Language Learning Advisors in fostering LLA has attracted various researchers' attention. For example, in [3], it is acknowledged that Language Learning Advisors can also be called counsellors, helpers, facilitators, mentors or consultants. These terminologies have also been analysed by [4,5], according to different skills and functions that learning advisors may possess. For instance, [6] has provided nine macro-skills (initiating, goal setting, modelling, guiding, modelling, supporting, giving feedback, evaluating, linking and concluding) and nine micro-skills (attending, restating, paraphrasing, summarizing, questioning, interpreting, reflecting feelings, empathizing, and confronting) which are frequently employed in the advising discourse by advisors. [3] has also listed ten examples of functions that an advisor acts, including raising awareness of language learning process, helping learners to identify learning goals, suggesting appropriate materials etc. Nonetheless, the central idea of Language Learning Advisors is to promote LLA, and nor-

mally they are in connection with the self-access language learning center (SALLC) [7], nowadays, the language-advisory service can also be served in advising room, classroom or even in written form (diaries, blogs, or self-study modules) [3].

Currently, increasing numbers of Chinese students coming to the UK for higher education [8]. However, it is found that Chinese students seem to lack experience in managing their own learning while studying abroad [9], and their perceived social and linguistic incompetence might be key challenges for them to study in a new academic culture [10]. In order to improve international students' language competence and learning abilities, the pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program in this research institute in the UK, includes Independent Learning Module to develop students' independent learning abilities [11,12]. This module provides Independent Learning Advisors to offer one-to-one/group language and academic advising sessions to promote students' active learning strategies, reflection, critical thinking, research skills, essay planning and also to facilitate language cafés to improve students' speaking skills [13,14]. Thus, it is found that Independent Learning Advisors do not only focus on students' language learning abilities but also support and guide students' academic progression and achievement compared to Language Learning Advisors, it explains why Independent Learning Advisors aim to foster some learning abilities which are not supported by Language Learning Advisors, such as critical thinking, re-

search skills, and essay planning.

However, there is a lack of research investigating Chinese students' previous experience on learning advisors, their beliefs about role and purpose of advisors, and we know quite little about how the students' previous learning experiences influence their beliefs. What is more, it is also worthwhile

to know how these students' perceptions of learner autonomy change over time throughout their overseas study. Nonetheless, if their learning characteristics and learning needs can be known and understood, the more focused support by advisors may shorten these students' transition period to a new academic culture.

## 2. Research questions

This study includes 120 Mainland Chinese Masters students on a pre-sessional EAP course, as well as students who are at the end of their one-year study at the research institute in the UK. This study aims to, quantitatively and qualitatively analyze these students' perspectives on the role of Independent Learning Advisors during their transition to the British academic culture. This study gives insight into how does this transition take place, how do the students' perspectives change at different time-periods, and how do their perceptions of learner autonomy change over time.

Thus, this study addresses the following research questions:

- a. What are Chinese students' perceptions of *learner autonomy* at different time-periods (1st week on the course, 6th week on the course, 1 year on the course)?
- b. What are Chinese students' perspectives on the role of *Independent Learning Advisors* at different time-periods (1st week on the course, 6th week on the course, 1 year on the course)?
- c. How do students' *transition process* impact on their perspectives on the role of advisors and their perceptions of learner autonomy?

## 3. The case study

### 3.1 Participants

*Three groups of Chinese Masters students taking (took) pre-sessional EAP course.* (see Tab. 1)

retrospective interviews to collect quantitative and qualitative data. (sample questions see Tab. 2)

### 3.2 Research instruments

This study employs questionnaires, and

**Tab. 1 The information of student participants**

	Sample size (male/female)	English language proficiency levels (IELTS)	Departments
Week 1	50	The scores vary from 5.5 to 7.0	14 disciplines: including finance, marketing, fashion, film, archaeology, education, linguistics, etc.
Week 6	50		
1 year	20		

**Tab. 2 Research instruments**

1. Questionnaires (Chinese/ English version)	N=120	<p>Sample questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Background information</li> <li>How do you define the conception of learner autonomy (自主学习性)?</li> <li>Does your Chinese university offer language/academic advisory service (语言/学术专业咨询服务)? (Single choice; A. Yes B. No)</li> <li>What do you think role (角色) of the Independent Learning Advisors in fostering learner autonomy (培养自主学习性)? (multiple-choice)</li> <li>How do the Independent Learning Advisors foster learner autonomy (培养自主学习性)? (multiple-choice)</li> </ul>
2. Semi-structured interviews ( in Chinese/ English)	N=15	<p>Sample questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have your perceptions of learner autonomy (自主学习性) changed throughout the EAP course/overseas study? (A. Yes. Previously I thought learner autonomy was -, but now I think -./ B. No.)</li> <li>Have your perspectives on the role of Independent Learning Advisors changed throughout the EAP course/ overseas study? (A. Yes. Previously, I thought they are -, but now I feel they are -./ B. No. )</li> </ul>

## 4. Main findings and implications

### 4. 1 Chinese students' perceptions of learner autonomy at different time-periods

**Tab. 3 How do you define the conception of learner autonomy?**

Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>To study by oneself, without others' help</i></li> <li><i>Learning is based on my own needs, without others' requirements or push</i></li> <li><i>In China, we can just "follow", but in the UK we need to decide everything by ourselves</i></li> </ul>
Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Taking responsibilities of learning by myself</i></li> <li><i>It refers to various learning abilities (time management, the capacity of employing learning resources)</i></li> <li><i>The willingness of study</i></li> </ul>
1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Lifelong learning</i></li> <li><i>Having positive attitudes toward learning</i></li> </ul>

The results firstly show that the Chinese students' perceptions of learner autonomy shift from "*to study by oneself*", toward "*taking responsibilities of learning by myself*", then to "*lifelong learning*" at different time-periods. It indicates that their perceptions of learner autonomy are getting profound throughout their one-year study in the UK. For instance, during the first week on the course, the students understand learner autonomy as a type of learning method, and the crucial point for them to evaluate learner autonomy is whether a learner fully depends on himself/herself, the students seem to completely deny the impact of other people on the development of a learner's learner autonomy. However, as [15,16] argued, learner autonomy does not refer to a learner who learns without any help from others, as not every learner is autonomous even there is no involvement of the teacher or someone else, and the key point to evaluate a learner is autonomous or not is what a person has the potential to learn rather than the method of learning [17]. Moreover, based on [16], learner autonomy does not refer to independent learning, it involves the ability of *inter*dependent learning, which means that learner autonomy includes the ability of getting help from others or collaborating with others [18]. However, as the students mentioned, in China, teachers tend to decide everything for students, it explains why the only "independent" occasion for them is to fully learn by themselves. Nonetheless, after around six weeks into the course, it shows that the Chinese students gradually recognize that learner autonomy

refers to various learning abilities, including the ability of time management, the capacity of employing learning resources etc., which echoes the definition of learner autonomy presented by [19], "*the ability to take charge of one's own learning*". It also suggests that at this period, the students acknowledge the influence of others' help in the development of learner autonomy, though "others" mainly refers to learning materials/resources in this context. Moreover, the Chinese students at the end of one-year study, recognize the concept of "*lifelong learning*", which is considered as the goal of learner autonomy [20]. It indicates that the students realize that learner autonomy is not for temporary learning, it is the long-term efficient learning, rather than episodic or temporary independent efforts to control over their own learning [17].

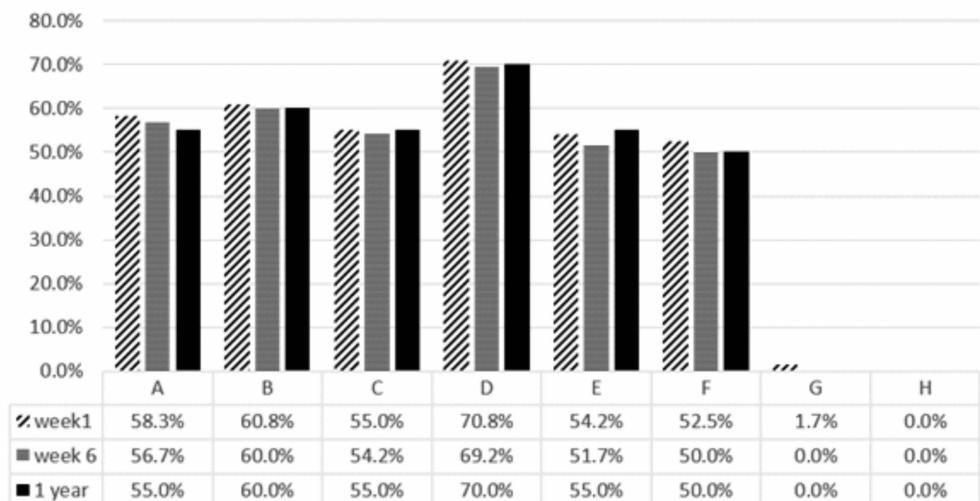
Additionally, the results show that the students on three time-periods all recognize that the concept of self-motivation is highly related to learner autonomy. For instance, students feel that in this UK university, "*learning is based on my own needs, without others' requirements or push*". By contrast, in China they "*learn something given*" and they can just "*follow*" teachers. Moreover, the students feel "*the willingness of study*" and "*having the positive attitudes toward learning*" can initiate their autonomy. It echoes to [21]'s argument that self-motivation is closely related to the perception of being able to choose and of being able to control one's own actions, thus it proves that self-motivation has a stronger link with autonomy. The reason that why these students recognize self-motivation while studying in this

university, is the academic culture of this UK university encourages students to control their own learning by themselves, such as setting learning goals for themselves, realizing their own learning needs, instead of making students to follow teachers.

## 4.2 Chinese students' perspectives on the role of Independent Learning Advisors in fostering learner autonomy

### 4.2.1 The skills that Independent Learning Advisors possess in fostering learner autonomy

The results collected from question-



Key: A. Helps you decide self-study methods B. Helps you decide self-study strategies C. Helps you decide learning aims D. Helps you choose learning resources E. Answers your questions about language F. Feedback of your performance G. None of them H. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fig. 1 How do the Independent Learning Advisors foster learner autonomy? (Multiple-choice)**

Furthermore, in the interviews (see Tab. 4), the students specifically mention how the advisors promote learner autonomy through supporting students' learning methods, learning strategies and giving feedback on students' performance. For example, the advisors suggest useful and interesting Apps

naires(see Fig. 1) firstly show the students at three time-periods demonstrate very similar results toward each option (A to H: referring to different skills that the advisors have) with typically 2% difference between each other. On the other hand, it shows that around 69% to 70% of the students agree on option D (D. helps you choose learning resources), which makes this option accounts the most. Meanwhile, option B (B. helps you decide self-study strategies) accounts the second most with around 60% of the students' inclinations.

on smart phones to boost students' interests and motivation toward learning. The advisors also emphasize the importance of authentic learning resources in language learning, and it may can explain why most of the students agree on option D (D. helps you choose learning resources), and the most in-

teresting point is that some students even feel, as the advisors come from different culture backgrounds, the advisors entail various culture resources. Moreover, the students feel learning strategies suggested by the advisors highly improve their learning efficiency and productivity, this probably is the reason why option B(B. helps you decide self-study strategies) accounts the second most. Additionally, the students highly feel that the advisors' detailed and practical feedback enable them to put learner autonomy into practice.

To sum up, the results indicate that the advisors develop learner autonomy in a comprehensive way, as all the students demonstrate very similar results toward each option, it refers to that the advisors support students' each learning aspect. Secondly, it proves that the advisors pay closer attention

to students' learning abilities, which echoes the heart of learner autonomy [15,16,17,21]. For instance, the advisors emphasize how to undertake self-study strategies, how to choose learning resources, it clearly illustrates that the advisors put much more attention on "how" to learn, instead of "what" to learn. In another word, learning abilities equip students with tools to solve problems in the future, even when they do not have formal education anymore, which means it can have a beneficial effect on their lifelong learning. Besides, the advisors bridge the gap between theories and practices of learner autonomy in a technical way by offering useful learning resources, learning strategies, practical feedback etc., instead of leaving learner autonomy as a formality.

Tab. 4 How do the Independent Learning Advisors foster learner autonomy?

Learning methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Suggest useful Apps on smart phones to integrate the learning into our daily life</i></li> <li><i>Suggest us to talk with native speakers to improve the speaking skills</i></li> <li><i>Suggest to employ authentic English media program or publications, e.g. BBC</i></li> </ul>
Learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Suggest interesting Apps to conduct time management</i></li> <li><i>Suggest to compare planned aims and actual outcomes</i></li> <li><i>These good strategies enhance my work efficiency and productivity a lot</i></li> </ul>
Feedback on performance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Analyse my weaknesses and strengths, and provide very detailed suggestions which enable me to put learner autonomy into practice</i></li> </ul>

Meanwhile, it might can also clarify why the students' perceptions of learner autonomy getting profound throughout the EAP course, and how the Independent Learning Advisors play a role on that. As mentioned before, during the first week, the

students fully deny the involvement of other people or learning resources in the development of learner autonomy, however, learner autonomy includes the ability of *interdependent learning* [18], which is the reason why advisors emphasize capacities of employing learning materials/resources, in this

way, the students realize the role of other people and learning resources in autonomy. Besides, as the advisors put attention on "how" to learn, it enables the students to recognize learner autonomy refers to learning abilities instead of learning methods, which also further guides students to realize that the equipment of learning abilities has a benefit effect on their lifelong learning rather than temporary learning. Besides, the advisors recommend different ways and tools to initiate students' interests and self-motivation toward learning, as the advisors understand that the academic culture of this UK university prefers students to take control of their own learning, and self-motivation can keep students continuously making efforts in controlling learning, it explains why the students gradually shift their extrinsic motivation to self-motivation. These skills that the Independent Learning Advisors possess also echo the functions that Language Learning Advisors act<sup>[3]</sup>, including raising awareness of language learning process, helping learners to identify learning goals, suggesting appropriate materials.

#### **4.2.2 Chinese students' perspectives on the role of Independent Learning Advisors at different time-periods**

The findings gathered by questionnaires (see Fig. 2), firstly show that most of the students feel the advisors play different roles in promoting learner autonomy rather than one role, as option A to H are all agreed by the students at different time-periods with different proportions (option A to H refer to different roles played by Independent Learning Advisors). It indicates

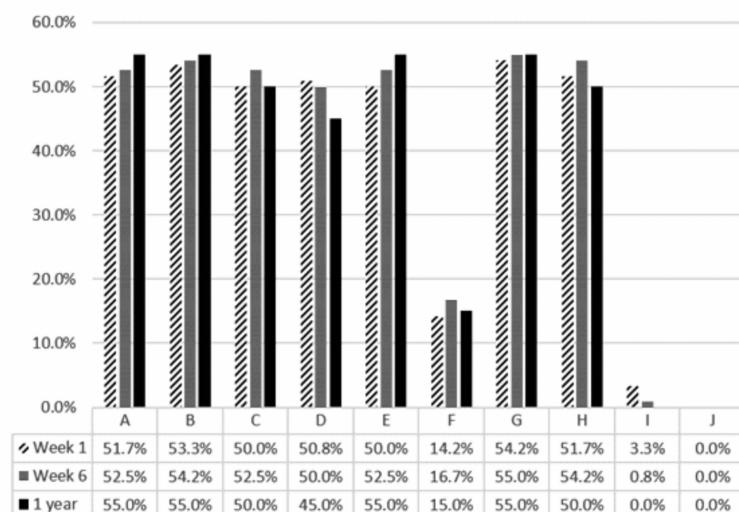
that the advisors play complex roles in fostering learner autonomy, this corresponds to the comprehensive skills that the advisors possess as mentioned before. However, it is found that most of the students do not agree that the advisors play a role as the monitor or evaluator, as option F(F. monitor & evaluator) accounts the least. Secondly, it demonstrates that the students at different time-periods agree on different roles played by the advisors. For example, it illustrates that throughout the first six weeks on the course, more students (around 55%) agree on option G (G. resource supplier). This indicates that at this stage, the students tend to feel the advisors support them more as a resource supplier. Gradually, after one year, students start to agree on options A, B, E (A. guider, B. counsellor & helper, E. motivator) as well, in addition to option G. It presents that after one year, the students seem to feel that the advisors play much more roles in learner autonomy, including guider, counselor, and motivator. Meanwhile, it is noticed that during the first six weeks into the course, a small proportion of the students feel that advisors do not play any roles in learner autonomy, although the percentage keeps decreasing from 3.3% to 0.8%. However, after around one year, this proportion does not remain anymore. It indicates that the students gradually realize that advisors play different roles in developing learner autonomy throughout their study in the UK.

The results also show how students' perspectives on role of advisors change throughout the course/overseas study. (see Tab. 5)

**Tab. 5 Have your perspectives on role of the Independent Learning Advisors changed throughout the courses/overseas study?**

Before the EAP course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers or private tutors who are responsible for teaching</li> <li>Monitors who might supervise students</li> </ul>
Week 1 & Week 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource supplier</li> <li>Provide various resources in terms of different learning aspects (Apps, BBC, Magazines)</li> <li>The advisors come from different backgrounds, they entail different culture resources</li> </ul>
1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Guider (how to conduct critical thinking)</li> <li>Counsellor (practical and detailed suggestions)</li> <li>Motivator (positive feedback make me feel much more confident; initiate my interests by suggesting me to use interesting Apps).</li> </ul>

The results present that before the ever, once the students start the EAP course, the students reckon advisors might course, they realize that the advisors do not be teachers to teach them English or the advisors act as a teacher or a monitor as they imagine. advisors are monitors who might sit in front of the class to supervise their self-study. How-



Key: A. Guider B. Counsellor & Helper C. Organizer & Designer D. Co-operator (Peer partner, Friend, Participant) E. Motivator F. Monitor & Evaluator G. Resource supplier H. Atmosphere creator I. None of them J. Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Fig. 2 What do you think role of the Independent Learning Advisors in fostering learner autonomy? (Multiple-choice)**

Additionally, during the first six weeks, the students feel the advisors are re-

source supplier, but after around one year, the students feel the advisors play more

complex roles in fostering learning abilities and learner autonomy.

However, it is acknowledged that learning advisors are not teachers, as they do not transmit specific knowledge to students according to a syllabus<sup>[3]</sup>, learning advisors offer “*a form of therapeutic dialogue that enables an individual to manage a problem*”<sup>[6]</sup>, which is quite different from discourse usually employed by teachers<sup>[3]</sup>. The reason why students reckon the advisors are

teachers or monitors, is that language-advisory service is fairly rare in China currently, especially in mainland China, as in the survey, it shows that only 11. 67% of the students have experienced language/academic advisory service in Chinese universities before they come to the UK. Thus, it indicates that the Chinese students quite lack experience of language/academic advisory service and learning advisors.

## 5. Conclusions

This mixed-methods study indicates that Chinese students gain deeper perceptions of learner autonomy in conjunction with better understanding of the complex advisor features through their integration into British academic culture. This lies in the facts that the British education system is more student-centered compared to the more teacher-centered Chinese education system. Thus, students' transition to the British education system bridges their gap between the theory and practice of learner autonomy. Additionally, the equipment of language/academic advisory-service in British education system enables students to be familiar with this service that they have never experienced before, but also offers students an affordance in developing their learner autonomy.

This study also reveals the learning characteristics and learning needs of Chinese students. For example, Chinese students often lack experience of learner autonomy and language/academic advisory service, and they are not very confident and even lack

sense of security while moving to a new academic culture. Based on that, learning advisors may need to explain the concept of learner autonomy, also the roles and purposes of advisors to enhance the integration of Chinese students. Additionally, advisors may need to provide more positive feedback to initiate their learning motivation, confidence and interests. Learning advisors might also need to pay more focus on sub-set of learning skills and learning strategies, which Chinese students have never experienced before such as critical thinking and time-management.

Finally, as there is such difference in the education systems between China and the UK, learning advisors could consider finding a balance between teacher-centered approach and learner-centered approach, at least initially, in order to ease Chinese students' culture shock or learning shock while they moving to a new academic culture.

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# Rethinking Learner Autonomy from Learners' Perspectives

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**Abstract:** This paper presents three learners' stories with different setting and time scales: a Chinese worker as a language user in Japan, a Japanese language major student in Chinese university, and a German learner of Japanese participated in eTandem project. These stories were constructed by narrative analysis with qualitative data. Comparing the three cases, it was found that participants build social relations in a group/ community they belong to or have a relationship with significant others by exercising learner autonomy. Their autonomy as Japanese-related person was fostered and constrained in their relationships of the social context. Learner autonomy can be seen as socially mediated agency to obtain authorship of one's action and voice, which leads to an enhanced second language life. Moreover, it is shaped and developed by social relationships.

**Keywords:** Narrative analysis, Learner autonomy, Learner's voice, Japanese-related self

## 1. Introduction

Benson (2011) states that learner autonomy is “the capacity to take control of one’s own learning” (p. 61) and discusses its three dimensions of control a learner can exercise: learning management, cognitive processes and learning content. From an ecological perspective, learner autonomy is defined as

socially mediated agency (Toohey & Norton, 2003), and means having the authorship of one's actions and one's own word (van Lier, 2004). Learner autonomy develops through interaction with more capable peers (Little, 2000), through expanding ZPD and ZPA (Nakai, 2016).

Murray, et al. (2014) claims that learner autonomy is influenced by factors related to learner's emotion, learning space, and social environment. Moreover, learner autonomy is related to the learners' intrinsic motivation which is relevant to the learner's own view of life (Ushioda, 1996). Therefore, research focusing on learner autonomy needs to investigate holistically learners' experiences in their real lives. In order to explore learners'

experiences, narrative analysis works effectively and practically (Benson, 2005; Aoki, 2009).

In this paper, three learners' narratives with different time scales shown as below are introduced to explore learner autonomy through their experience of learning Japanese as a second language beyond the classroom.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Narrative analysis

According to Barkhuizen, Benson and Chik (2014), narrative inquiry is conducted "either by using stories as research data or by using storytelling as a tool for data analysis or presentation of findings" (p. 3). They also stress the importance of narrative inquiry in research in language teaching and learning nowadays from two points below. Firstly, it helps us to understand phenomena from learners' perspectives of those who experience them and the inner mental world of language teachers and learners. Secondly, it helps us to understand the nature of language teaching and learning as a social and educational activity.

The research on learner autonomy has been conducted focusing on learners' ability and action in/outside the classroom. Howev-

er, Aoki (2009) pointed out that "we need more balanced holistic approaches that situate individual capacity in the social context" (p. 254). In order to do so, narrative analysis (Polkinghorne, 1995) is one of the powerful tools to examine learner autonomy over a long time span. Exploring learner autonomy by using narrative analysis will provide us with a new perspective to research learner autonomy of which bases on the learning experience of learners.

### 2.2 Data collection and analysis

This study focuses on three participants in different settings and timescales.

Various narrative and non-narrative data were collected to understand each participant holistically. They were analyzed and constructed as a story to convey the understanding of the meaning of data.

**Tab. 1 Research participants**

Case	Participant profiles	
	Pseudonym/gender	background
1	Wang/Male	A Chinese worker, 15 year staying in Japan
2	Mei/Female	A Japanese language major student in Mainland China
3	Lea/Female	A German university student, participated in eTandem project

**Tab. 2 Data collections**

Case	Pseudonym	Contents of data
1	Wang	1 <sup>st</sup> interview 57 mins (12, July, 2015) 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview 65 mins (23, August, 2015) 3 <sup>rd</sup> interview 76 mins (27, September, 2015)
2	Mei	1 <sup>st</sup> interview 35 mins (12, September, 2012) 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview 60 mins (16, March, 2013) 3 <sup>rd</sup> interview 50 mins (14, January, 2014)
3	Lea	Interview 162 mins (21, March, 2011) Questionnaire before interviewing and two emails with additional questions after interview. Video recordings of two Skype sessions, Learner diary, Chat and email logs with researchers, Copy of resources used in the tandem sessions, field notes.

Three stories of learning experience were constructed by narrative analysis, in order to understand how their learner autonomy was situated in the social context.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Case 1: Wang's story

After graduation from graduate school, a Chinese worker Wang found employment at a major corporation near Tokyo. This was the success he had aimed for when he came to Japan. He said this was the dream every overseas Chinese student had at the time. But he decided to come back to his second hometown Osaka, because he wanted to help his Japanese friend Tomo (pseudonym) and

his family who were in trouble and had supported Wang's life in Osaka.

In Osaka, he worked for a language school then he changed the job and now is working for a bank in Osaka.

Many of his Chinese friends in China and Japan run their own company. Through learning about their lives, he also wanted to own his own company in Japan. But he could not do it because he held working visa which didn't allow him to run his own business.

After debating whether to get a permanent visa or acquire Japanese nationality, he decided and got a permanent visa which doesn't limit his job. Now he is working at bank in Osaka to get knowledge of running company and Japanese business language and culture.

“Learning Japanese at language school and university was no more than just getting knowledge of Japanese language, the same as studying at school in my childhood. I think that learning Japanese is more about getting out into the real world and trying to do what I want in Japanese.”

“I’m living life as a worker in Japan now, but being told that my Japanese is very good means I am still out of Japanese society. Nothing changes rapidly. Who I am now is a product of the difficult struggles I have accumulated over my time living in Japan.”

Now he recognizes himself as a member of Japanese society. He reflects that he has spent his second language life through increasing Japanese proficiency which enables him to do what he wants in society. For instance, he needs Japanese proficiency to defend his position and protect his rights in society, as shown in one excerpt of his narrative below.

“I was not good at making inquiries because as a foreigner I wasn’t taken seriously. So, when I needed to inquire about something, I asked Tomo in Osaka. One day, he asked me why I didn’t do it by myself even though I could speak Japanese well. Since then, I tried to do this with his support. I memorized how he talked. And after he asked me to do it by myself, I made a phone

call while he was listening to me. After practicing, I can do it alone and now I make use of being a foreigner to bend the rules if I need to. I have so much confidence that I sometimes do it for Tomo.”

He improved his socially disadvantaged position because of being a foreigner through becoming able to make inquiries and negotiation, furthermore he can take advantage of being a foreigner. In this way, Wang had clear ideas about what kind of person he should be in his communities in Japan.

During his life in Japan, he had a role model whom he wished to be, and dependable persons who can support him appropriately. With these significant others, he participated in some groups and communities he wanted to belong to, which led to the construction of his social identities in society. He exercised his autonomy as a learner in order to construct his desired social identities (Riley, 2007) under the influence of social complex forces: the master narrative he grew up with in China, the immigrant model story he inherited from his fellow Chinese, institutional constraints that limited what he could do, and his significant others both in China and Japan.

### 3.2 Case 2: Mei’s story

Mei has an experience of being exposed to Japanese pop culture before entering university, such as watching Japanese songs, watching animations and dramas, but found that she did not have a strong interest in them.

After becoming a Japanese language major student, Mei devoted most of her time

to learn grammar and vocabulary via Japanese classroom. That is because Mei thought that a good basic of language knowledge is of great importance for learning a language. Moreover, she did not like Japanese pop culture so much. However, one of Mei's seniors told her that watching animation and drama on the Internet is a good way to learn Japanese, so Mei tried to do this. While realizing she barely knows what she loves about animations and dramas, she watched them for her own fun only when she had time.

However, Mei realized that she has a problem in speaking Japanese naturally when she did language exchanges with her Japanese friends. Her Japanese friends gave her some advice to improve her speaking skills by watching Japanese animations or dramas, so that Mei started consciously using them for her Japanese language learning. She searched informations of the latest animations and dramas on the Japanese language learning websites or video websites. She tried to read the introductions or some episodes to choose the ones she is interested in. After watching some animations and dramas, she found her preferences and started to enjoy watching them more and more. She also watched shows which she is fond of for several times.

At the same time, she used some learning strategies when watching animations and dramas. For example, Mei looked up new words she heard in the shows, and she took notes and tried to remember the new words. She chose some phrases which were useful for daily conversations and mimicked them for practicing. She tried to use words and

phrases learned from animations and dramas or used them as a topic while communicating with her Japanese friends.

Although Mei stopped watching animations for a while, she continued watching again when she realized that she was not able to follow her classmate's conversations about animations during break of the classes. She searched on the internet about animations which her classmates talking about and watched the ones that she had interest in.

Mei kept changing resources and strategies according to the changes in her learning goals or the development of her proficiency. After using what she learned from animations and dramas and realizing that she could understand more and more in the shows, Mei started to use animation more purposely for the sake of learning. She aimed at learning phrases but she set her target to learn how to use phrases in a conversation.

### 3.3 Case 3: Lea's story

Lea is a university student who majors in mathematics at a university in Germany. She was interested in Japanese because her favorite music group, "Queen", sang a song with Japanese lyrics when she was young. After taking two elementary level Japanese courses, she joined the eTandem<sup>①</sup> project in order to practice what she learned with a

<sup>①</sup> Tandem learning is a learning mode which two learners with different mother tongues work together in order to learn from each other based on two principles, reciprocity and learner autonomy (Little & Brammerts, 1996).

Japanese partner and develop reading proficiency in Japanese characters. The project was collaboration between a Japanese university and a German university on a voluntary basis. It consisted of written communication by emails and oral communication by Skype via the Internet over five weeks. Lea was paired with Aki (pseudonym), a Japanese learner of German. They exchanged 24 emails and had three Skype sessions within five weeks.

In the first week, Lea was excited about sending the first message<sup>①</sup> to Aki. At the same time, she was anxious about her lack of language proficiency because she had never communicated with Japanese people except for her Japanese teachers. But after the first exchange, she got confidence because Aki understood her Japanese message and Lea was mostly able to understand what Aki wrote in Japanese. Lea wrote that “Watashi no shumi wa gasshou ni utaukotdesu. (My hobby is singing in chorus.)” (15/Nov/2010). Aki replied that she liked German and Austrian composers and that is the reason why she decided to major in German study. Aki also wrote “watashitachi ha futaritomo onngaku wo shite imasu ne! Anata no utagoe wo kite mitai desu. (We both play music. I want to hear your singing voice.)” (18/Nov/2010). In replying in the second week, Lea explained the concert of her chorus group before she wrote about a second topic. Afterwards, Lea and Aki continued exchanging messages about classical music, in addition to writing about the fixed topics. In the third week, Lea was quite eager to finally meet Aki face-to-face in the first Skype

session, after they exchanged eight emails in two weeks. She could speak a lot of Japanese thanks to her preparation. According to a German coordinator who observed their Skype session nearby, Lea was very pleased to be able to see Aki directly and communicate in Japanese. In the fourth week, Lea spent about four hours to write a very long email composed of 2282 Japanese characters. She wrote about her favorite movies and music according to the fixed topic as well as the news about a Japanese orchestra in the Christmas season which she had watched on TV in that week. During writing the message, she found that she needed to learn more vocabulary. Therefore, she made a vocabulary list using the words that she looked up in writing the email and registered 79 new words and phrases in flash card software for memorizing them. She also intentionally used new grammar in writing emails and talking in Skype. In the fifth week, she had the longest Skype session with Aki and asked her questions about Japanese grammar and culture.

Lea and Aki found a shared interest (= classical music) and continued personal interaction besides fixed topics. Through the authentic communication with her tandem partner, Lea regarded Japanese as a tool of communication, not as a subject. Lea's per-

<sup>①</sup> Participants start exchanging emails at the beginning of the project and from the third week they also have Skype sessions. Topics for each week were fixed by a guideline and participants were supposed to send at least two messages and correct five mistakes for each.

sonal interest in Aki motivated her learning and she spent more time in preparing sessions and learning Japanese. At the same

time, she felt her improvement in Japanese proficiency through the interaction with Aki and this feeling became her motivation.

## 4. Discussion

We would like to consider the three cases in two points as shown below.

1) Participating in communities and constructing relationships with significant others

2) Considering language learners as language users involved in second language context

### 4.1 Social relations in a group/ community

Comparing three cases with different time scales, they have similarities in terms of building social relations with significant others in a group/community which each participant wanted to belong to by exercising their autonomy.

Case 1: Wang participated in communities motivated by role models who were his Japanese friends and significant others both in China and Japan, who gave him appropriate support during his life in Japan.

Case 2: Mei used Japanese animations and dramas after her senior and Japanese friends suggest to do it. She stopped watching animations for a while, however, she tried to keep watching them which enabled her to maintain the relationships with her friends. Because animations and dramas are a common topic among them.

Case 3: Lea became eager to construct her relationship with Aki after having found that they had the same interest and contin-

ued personal interaction. Also, Lea was interested in learning Japanese more relating with their interests and now she is learning Japanese as a tool of communication.

Through social relations, they made efforts to construct a social identity or obtain a Japanese-related self while participating in groups/communities or keeping the relationship with classmates, friends, and language partners. In this research, the three participants expressed themselves to significant others and participated in community autonomously by using Japanese.

### 4.2 Language learners as language users

According to Bakhtin (1986), in our society, every group of people has a distinct way of talking and using language which is called a speech genre. It is conceivable that the language participants wanted to learn is his speech genre. Through acquiring a speech genre in a group of people, they acquired their own voice which led to their construction of social identities/language relating selves on an equal footing. Applying this theory, the three participants seemed to construct a social identity while participating in groups/communities or keep the relationship with classmates, friends, and language partners by using Japanese.

Case 1: Wang learned how to make in-

quiries through imitating his Japanese friend and support from him.

Case2: Mei tried to understand what her classmates were talking about animations. She also tried to use words and phrases learned from animations and dramas or talked as a topic while communicating with her Japanese friends to express herself.

Case3: Lea tried to share her interest,

classical music, with Aki by using Japanese.

In short, they are language users as well as learners. Through participation in communities and constructing relations with significant others, they construct social identities and language related selves by exercising their learner autonomy fostered in their relationships of the social context.

## 5. Conclusion

To summarize previous studies and the findings of this research, language learners/users need to construct their own voice to situate themselves in L2 related social relationships. This is just as necessary as learning contents, resources and especially language knowledge.

They also need learner autonomy in pursuit of their own voice, which fosters language learning and leads to participation in the second language society. Taking from their stories, learner autonomy can be seen as socially mediated agency to obtain authorship of one's action and voice, which leads to an enhanced second language life, and that their autonomy as a Japanese relating people were shaped and developed by social relationships.

At the same time, the mechanism of exercising learner autonomy is not simple. Complexity systems (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2002; 2008, Mercer, 2011) is useful when trying to understand this. Complex system is an evolving and self-organizing system composed of many factors that interact with and adopt to each other. In this sys-

tem, factors are related in non-linear ways and cannot be reduced to simple cause and effect relationships. A small change in one element generates a change in the whole system.

Wang's learner autonomy which helps him to construct social identities is fostered and constrained in this complex system of the social context. Significant others don't always help him to foster learner autonomy and construct social identities. Mei kept learning through watching dramas and animations not because she got interested in but because she wanted to improve her Japanese ability and to maintain relationships with her friends. Lea changed in focus on learning from increasing Japanese proficiency to using Japanese to share Lea and Aki's common interests. Complexity theory can acknowledge the mutual constitution of social and historical contexts and individuals as complex system (Sade, 2014).

As Palfreyman (2014) states that teachers need to keep an eye on where learners have come from or are heading from a broader and holistic view of learners context, we

think that we as educators need to listen to these narratives and bear them in mind as we design courses for our students. This is especially important for language education which still tends to focus on grammar drills and prescribed vocabulary without reflecting the real desires, experiences and needs of our actual students.

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# **Fostering Learner Autonomy through Continuous Student Feedback in Pursuit of Praxis and Establishment of I-Thou Dialogue in an EFL Classroom**

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**Abstract:** Development of learner autonomy is a challenging task, especially when students are not presented with regular opportunities to reveal their voice and take part in shaping, at least to a certain degree, classroom discourses. Engaging students in egalitarian teacher-students I-Thou dialogue (Buber, 1970) appears to be an effective way of empowering students voice, however there is need to investigate ways of practical implementation of this practice. Student feedback questionnaires (SFQs) have been widely used in tertiary institutions as a tool for establishing communication between students and teachers, as well as educational institutions, and evaluating course content and pedagogical methods applied. One of the major criticisms of this practice though is its summative nature and lack of closure of the feedback loop with students. Present study explores the practice of implementing formative continuous student feedback (CSF) throughout the duration of the whole course where teachers collect responses from students at the end of the class and close the loop in consecutive sessions by analyzing the feedback provided and acting upon it. Integrating the principles of Freire's praxis and Buber's I-Thou dialogue, this practice appears to be facilitative of building effective channels of communication between all parties involved, as well as developing greater sense of autonomy among students over the learning process in an English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. The research is conducted as part of a larger CSF project implemented at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong.

**Keywords:** Autonomy, Praxis, Student feedback, I-Thou dialogue

## 1. Introduction and background

Autonomy is commonly described as “the sense of having a choice and experiencing oneself as the initiator of one’s actions” (Bao & Lam, 2008, p. 269). Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, and Soenen (2005) elaborate on the role and significance of autonomy in human behavior in light of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), when people are perceived as possessing inherent needs for autonomy, relatedness and competence (Kaplan & Assor, 2010) arguing that “people have the natural inclination to engage in activities that are experienced as self-chosen or volitional” (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005, p. 468). It is further referred to as psychological need which is crucial for maintenance of individual’s well-being and development, reflecting “self-endorsement of actions on inner, intraindividual level” rather than “cognitive preference or an interpersonal value” (Vansteenkiste et al., 2005, p. 479). Learner autonomy has been described in terms of “taking control over one’s own learning” (Holec, as cited in Ismail & Yusof, 2012, p. 473), and has been commonly argued as the key indicator of a learner’s ability to achieve academic success, engage in life-long learning and be full participants in democratic discourses on a wider socio-political scale (Raya & Viera, 2015). It is also important to acknowledge that the very notion of learner autonomy, or autonomy in a broader sense of this word, is a multidimensional phenomenon with various modes of manifestation (Benson, 2013) and, due to social na-

ture of human development and the inevitable influence of immediate surrounding, cannot occur in a vacuum. Development of autonomy thus requires presence of the *Others* who act as reciprocates and respond by giving various kinds of feedback which help to validate one’s initiations of autonomous behavior.

Autonomy in human interaction could be witnessed through what Martin Buber described as an authentic I-Thou dialogue, as opposed to I-It interaction, where “Thou” acts on “I” just as “I” acts on “Thou”, without perceiving another as a “subject of coordination” (Buber, 1970, p. 67). Translating it into teacher-student relationships Buber elaborates on the nature of reciprocity in this dialogue by saying that “our students teach us” and further maintains that “we live in the currents of universal reciprocity” (Buber, 1970, p. 67). This concept of I-Thou dialogue, having had a profound effect in the world of philosophy could not have escaped the domain of education, where Buber’s ideas have been applied to the study of classroom discourses in the area of autonomy. For example, Kaplan and Assor (2010) maintain that presence of I-Thou dialogue between teachers and students is an effective tool for fostering autonomy and building more student-centred and needs sensitive classroom environments. Drawing on a body of literature, while discussing interconnect-edness between the concept of I-Thou dialogue and autonomy, they observe the fol-

lowing traces as distinctive of actions facilitative in development of autonomy: Taking into account others' world views and lived experiences, providing options, supporting initiative from the side of another participant, reducing the levels of power imbalance, understanding and communicating perceived appropriateness of actions, encouragement of constructive critique, and discouragement of excessive compliance from any of the parties involved. This understanding of autonomy-facilitative dialogic interaction very much aligns with the concept of dialogic education proposed by Freire based on the principles of addressing power imbalance in teacher-student interaction and acknowledging personal lived experiences of students with the teacher being an actor of transformative change facilitating the development of critical consciousness among students through participating in egalitarian discourses (Freire, 2005). These discourses are formed in the "climate of mutual trust" and teacher-student "partnership in naming of the world" (Freire, 2005, p. 91). Trust, in this case, becomes the pre-requisite requirement for an authentic dialogue, as well as its goal, because "Trust is contingent on the evidence which one party provides the others of his true concrete intentions; it cannot exist if that party's words do not coincide with their actions. To say one thing and do another-to take one's own word lightly-cannot inspire trust" (Freire, 2005, p. 91). This constistence between words and actions based on reflection constitutes the essence of praxis, which is the fundamental basis of genuine dialogic interaction built upon the values of

mutual accountability and responsibility, which is paramount for fostering autonomy-supportive classroom discourses.

Establishment of an egalitarian authentic autonomy-supportive I-Thou dialogue (Kaplan & Assor, 2010) though becomes problematic in teacher-centred classrooms with power imbalance between teachers and students (Reay, 2006) due to lack of opportunities given to students to reveal their voice (Mitsoni, 2006; Rudduck, 2006; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006). This, in turn, results in insufficient integrative motivation (Gardner, Tremblay, & Masgoret, 1997) among EFL learners which arguably leads to lack of engagement with the course and implementation of a meaningful teacher-student interaction based on the principles of praxis. This situation is further aggravated by ever growing class sizes and exam-oriented nature of courses, which often conditions both teachers and students to focus on the final 'result' missing a very important step of establishing better understanding of students' perceptions of teaching occurring in the classroom, which, in a way, undermines the effectiveness of meeting learning outcomes of a course. Given this situation, it becomes important to look for tools of establishing better communication between teachers and student during the course and encourage students' autonomy through giving them an opportunity to ask questions, provide suggestions and negotiate teaching practices applied by instructors. Presence of such communication channel would also be a very useful tool for teachers' self-reflection and ongoing professional development.

In an attempt to establish this channel of communication between students and teachers, as well as students and educational institutions, application of student feedback questionnaires has become a common practice (Ballantyne, Borthwick, & Packer, 2000; A. Ardalan, R. Ardalan, Coppage, & Crouch, 2007; Clayson & Sheffet, 2006; Rowley, 2003) and has been widely used for evaluation of the quality of teaching provided, rating of students' learning experience, as well as identifying opportunities for further enhancement of English language courses. Two types of SFQs are commonly applied: Summative and formative. Summative feedback is usually collected at the end of the course for evaluation purposes of the teaching strategies applied, overall evaluation of the course and suggestions for improvement of the course delivery and content. However, one of the major criticisms of this kind of feedback is lack of the closure of the feedback loop, which is arguably the most important stage in student feedback (Watson, 2003) when learners are becoming aware of the impact the feedback has on the delivery of the course in the future. This stage can also be described in terms of praxis, when students are presented with explicit evidence of teachers' reflection upon their feedback and initiation of change. Absence of this stage appears to have profound negative implications for students' perceptions of the purpose of the feedback collection because they are not aware of the consequences of their participation in the SFQs (Leckey & Neill, 2001), making this practice primarily a one-off evaluation event

rather than a way for implementing meaningful change in teaching and learning.

Formative feedback, on the other hand, is commonly argued as an effective tool for establishing teacher-student communication and enhancing learners' experience throughout the course (Newton, 1988; Chen & Hoshower, 2003; Wagenaar, 1995) facilitating explicit closure of the feedback loop through teachers responding to students' questions and suggestions. However, application of formative student feedback has received less attention among practicing ESL educators due to perhaps a number of reasons including but not limited to, the expected time commitment invested in designing feedback questionnaires, distributing them among students, collecting and analyzing responses, and acting upon them repeatedly throughout duration of the course. Having said that, use of this kind of ongoing student feedback practices appears to be highly beneficial for students' engagement and development of sense of autonomy in the classroom. It also arguably has a powerful potential to transform teacher-centered classroom discourses by making them more learner-centered through addressing students' ongoing concerns and needs as well as engaging all parties in a mutually-beneficial continuous egalitarian I-Thou dialogue.

Continuous student feedback (CSF), a concept current research is built on, implies application of formative feedback done on regular basis with students offering suggestions or asking for clarifications from teachers and teachers analyzing this feedback, reflecting upon it and communicating their

perceptions back to students as well as acting upon them by making adjustments in course delivery, when possible and deemed as appropriate. The idea of CSF is thus built upon the notion of Freire's praxis and Buber's I-Thou dialogue in an attempt to empower students' voices and integrate greater autonomy in teacher-student interaction by establishing higher levels of trust towards students in terms of initiating change for their own learning environment and being accountable for the feedback provided. This practice is established as a two-way communication, where both teachers and

students participate as active agents of change. The aim of this particular study is to focus specifically on students' perception of the practice and the key elements that make this practice useful. Thus, this study will attempt to investigate the extent to which the theoretical concepts of I-Thou dialogue and praxis are materialized in CSF from students' perspective, as well as the degree to which students see themselves as active agents of change in shaping learning and teaching context in terms of content and delivery.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Context and participants

The study took place at a language center at a tertiary institution in Hong Kong for one academic year. Several teachers were involved in implementing CSF with their groups. Out of all students involved, 16 were invited to share their perceptions of the practice in the interviews. Both Hong Kong and mainland Chinese learners were present among student participants, mostly in their first year of undergraduate study, with a small number being in their final years.

### 2.2 Method

Throughout two semesters (Autumn 2015 and Spring 2016) teachers were implementing CSF with their classes by providing students with an opportunity to give feedback on their teaching as well as course con-

tent, and ask questions when further elaboration or clarification was necessary. Students filled in the short questionnaires, and provided answers using a variety of tools including paper feedback forms and online platforms, most popular being Socrative. 16 students from various groups were invited to participate in interviews on voluntary basis. In order to avoid any perceived conflict of interest, interviews were conducted after the release of final grades, at the end of the semester, in a neutral environment, by student helpers hired and trained for research purposes. All interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed. All interview data have been stored on password-protected devices in order to protect participants' anonymity.

Interview data and written responses were further coded and organized around the following categories: (1) CSF as a tool of

communication; (2) Reciprocal and closure of the feedback loop; (3) Perceived ability to influence course delivery and content.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1 CSF as a tool of communication

Just like in any act of communication, be it verbal or non-verbal, effective implementation of I-Thou dialogue largely depends on the ability of all parties involved to reciprocate and respond in a timely manner, appropriate for the immediate context. Thus, timing and appropriateness of response among participants, the mode and frequency of such interaction become of great importance in the implementation of CSF. Half of the interviewed students expressed that collecting feedback after every session would be “too frequent” and too demanding, and they would be prone to write “similar comments” as they “don’t know what comments to give”. Nonetheless, overwhelming majority commented that “eSFQ” (electronic Student Feedback Questionnaire), conducted only at the end of the semester, was far from sufficient, which, in this light, appears to be rather a tool of evaluation than communication between students and teachers or educational institutions. Reflecting on the use of students’ feedback collected only at the end of the course, one of the students said, “maybe [the teacher] will evaluate after the course and [the feedback] may be useful for the future. But she can’t give us immediate response.” The keyword, “immediate”, provides an indicator as well as a rationale in determining the suitable frequency of feedback collection, balancing between the need

for teachers to address students’ concerns, both in terms of the course content and class delivery, and to effectively implement relevant actions, as well as the need to ensure that adequate time is allocated throughout the semester for thoughtful reflection on behalf of the students. This notion of “immediacy” of the response appears to be very important as it is definitely one of the key factors determining effectiveness of communication in everyday interaction and is an important component in dialogic teacher-student interaction.

The formats of feedback collection also deserve a special consideration as this gives an insight into the preferred mode of communication among students and the way it can ensure implementation of a meaningful feedback practice. The feedback channels applied included the traditional hand-written paper forms and a variety of electronic questionnaires facilitated by different online platforms, as well as emails. Based on the interview data, students seem to appreciate electronic modes of feedback collection more, when they could either download an app on their phones, or log in to a website, then complete the questionnaire:

It is very easy to use. We only need to click something. (Student B)

Give us multiple choice, give us some hints, more things for us to think about. (Student A)

Students particularly expressed some-

what negative perceptions of a blank paper with no guidelines or direct questions provided, which indicates the need for a constructive framework for communication:

You don't know what to say. There is no question, no any channel. (Student A)

We don't want to write. (Student B)

While two students appreciated the free-space paper style, saying they "add things freely" (Student C) and "write our own questions about things we find confusing immediately, what we like, what we want" (Student D), other students would prefer to be provided with some guidelines and options to choose from. And hence, the paper questionnaire, consisting of a few specific questions—with some requiring students to write very brief remarks and some to circle a rating—has proven to be an effective approach for CSF. For example, in one of such guided surveys it has been asked explicitly, "What did you think is the use of the TED talk in today's lesson?" The replies were therefore very specific and sometimes could be quite similar too, with a common wish for more videos to be shown in class as models or demonstration of public speaking skills. A large number of students also appreciated open-ended questions. Its only drawback, for the few students who preferred a more comprehensive and detailed reflection, would be that the questions were too general.

When asked whether students find the continuous feedback necessary, only a quarter said "no", probably because some might feel somewhat skeptical about it being done as an administrative procedure with no con-

nexion to learning, and probably also due to a misunderstanding in the meaning of "feedback" as it being necessarily related to complaints or criticism—rather than perceiving it in a more leveled sense of communication:

Not necessary for the student, but maybe necessary for the department. Not immediate, but for the future only. I don't have feeling. [It is] just a standard process. (Student E)

The teaching is quite good. I have nothing to criticise. (Student B)

Teachers will know what is proper for students, there is the course outline to follow. [...] And after all it depends on the student's individual ability. (Student A)

Students' impression of feedback as a "one-way" exercise—directed from (assigned and carried out, top-down) and toward (evaluation of teaching performance) teachers—seems to be reinforced by, as it seems, an unexamined assumption of the hierarchical difference in power when students are more seen as an "object" of education (more of an "It", in Buber's sense of the word) that at times seems to be a problematic to adjust. To address this issue it is paramount to explore the ways in which the importance of student's role in feedback and the classroom discourse can be emphasized more explicitly to learners. It is also important to re-examine and revitalize the actual meaning of the word "feedback" in light of meaningful interaction with a balance between specific guidelines and a degree of freedom, with a variety of questions and questionnaires and tools used. As the word "feed-back" literally comprises "feed" (the

act of giving food, to nourish, sustain, foster) and “back” (with a dual meaning of a reverse or re-turn in direction, as well as support, as in backbone), the following part highlights the importance of students’ voice in the practice of feedback-more as a dialogue, a form of communication than purely evaluative. In this light it seems that the principles of egalitarian I-Thou dialogue which is, in theory, supposed to be facilitating empowerment of students’ voice and validating their experiences and opinions, are not being entirely materialized, from the perception of some of the students. This self-perception of an “object” of education rather than its active agent seems to be not facilitative in terms of developing autonomy and agency among a certain number of learners. Having said that, majority of interview participants clearly indicated that CSF is an effective tool of communication between teachers and students and teachers’ self-reflection and is largely perceived as necessary.

### 3.2 Reciprocation and closure of feedback loop

In general, interviewees communicated that CSF was valuable for three main reasons: (1) Need for improving teaching practices; (2) seeking clarifications and asking questions related to the content of the course; (3) the process is perceived as emotional, rather than purely information-loaded, interaction.

First of all, participating students generally agreed on the positive effect of CSF on the enhancement in classroom discourses,

especially in terms of class delivery. For example, some of the suggestions for improvement included:

Merge the activities and the content together, it will be helpful for us. (Student A)

... won’t be too bored. English class is something I don’t really wanna participate in because it is not my course courses, and then we need to spend time on it. If the class is more fun or more interactive then it’s better. (Student F)

These suggestions present valuable observations on behalf of students that activities should “merge” with the content (be purposeful and useful for achieving learning outcomes), and the need for implementing active, engaging learning.

Students also perceived CSF as an effective channel for follow-up questions outside class time (“three hours is a long time for us [...] we learn and forget something at the same time”, said Student B), especially when they encountered problems when doing homework. As students belong to different disciplines, some might experience confusion with very different aspects of the class content, referencing formats pointed out specifically, but they might feel that their concerns could be irrelevant to others and would not want to ask for clarification during class time. Thus, instead of approaching a teacher face-to-face or addressing the whole group openly, anonymous feedback to the teacher in forms of specific questions could be a more personal channel to have one’s questions addressed.

Finally, students reportedly see CSF not just as a tool for exchanging informa-

tion, but also a tool for emotional ‘bonding’ and emphasized the intended emotional component in the responses they provided, as well as appreciating instructor’s investment and effort in improving one’s teaching:

If I give negative comments, they may feel very disappointed. (Student A)

Teachers need some motivation to teach better. (Student B)

I just try to tell what I really feel. I don’t have any purpose, just feel what I want to say and I say it. (Student C)

When I give comment, the teacher will ask why, she tries to improve herself. Even there is no significant change, it is good to see the attitude that she is trying. (Student G)

It is therefore worth noticing that based on the interview data, a majority of the students expressed that they were reluctant in giving “negative response” to their teachers in feedback forms. The reasons given mostly were evident of presence of an empathetic care for their teacher’s feelings, and a valid belief in the need to express encouragement and recognition towards each other, a human feeling both teachers and students can easily relate to.

However, concern for the teacher’s emotional state does not always appear to be an obstacle for providing “negative” or constructive feedback. Among those who did reportedly include “negative comments” in their feedback forms, a common perception was that these were not “personal”, “just recommendations for improvement. Even if I leave a negative comment, I just encourage the department to improve”, said Student D.

These students reported writing constructive comments on specific areas where teachers can do better, some of the comments suggesting that course handouts were “too much” and they could be better organized, or sharing comments related to teaching tools.

Nevertheless, there were those who have chosen not to provide comments for further improvement or “negative” comments for the reasons mostly justified by their own set of priorities in terms of deciding which courses are to be perceived as “useful”. For example, Student E shared that he never intended to write “negative” comments for the ELC course because he took the course to fulfill his university requirement and thus did not believe in the need to be invested in CSF in terms of seeking for the ways of improving his learning experience. Having said that, he also mentioned that he did provide negative feedback in an extreme case when, in one of the courses he has taken, “the teacher was really bad [...] he did not do anything. The content was even wrong. I can’t learn what I should learn [...] the teacher’s teaching still is really bad.” This student’s perception of the course as not being important, resulting in his relative disengagement from CSF could possibly be rooted in what we referred to previously as seeing oneself in an objectified way in the context of the course (the “It”). However, on the other hand, by indicating relevance and usefulness of certain courses and his intention to be or not to be personally invested in improvement of the course could also be seen as a manifestation of agency and autonomy, when one sets one’s

own priorities and acts upon them. The challenge of tertiary education in this case would be to ensure that courses taken are perceived as relevant to students and build a bridge of better communication and understanding of students' needs and perceptions, an endeavor in which CSF could be a useful and effective tool.

In order to ensure effectiveness of student-teacher communication channel built by means of CSF it is important to emphasize that the overwhelming majority of students interviewed stated that the *sense of closure of the feedback loop is essential*. It has been explicitly stated by Student E, who put it in the following way: "If we give feedback and [the teacher] didn't do anything, it is useless". This is the closure of the feedback loop in CSF that ensures that feedback is not only an evaluation of teachers and teaching for departmental administrative purpose, but a tool for stimulating students' awareness of the fluid and mutually beneficial participation of teachers and students in shaping classroom discourse, as well as increasing perceived relevance of the course to students. Only through explicit closure of the feedback loop it appears possible to talk about the implementation of praxis in communication, when students *reveal* their voice, teachers critically evaluate and *reflect upon* suggestions provided and *act* upon them.

### 3.3 Perceived ability to influence course delivery and content

From the perspective of transformative and critical pedagogies the talk about "class-

room discourse" should indeed be understood in a much broader sense, beyond the four walls of a physical classroom as it would be reasonable to assume that education itself cannot be superficially separated from wider socio-cultural and political discourses. Learning progress itself undoubtedly goes far beyond a sequence of class activities and assessments, which often become the key focus in exam-oriented educational contexts and the awareness of the way education might have direct impact on students' everyday lived experiences might not be obvious to learners. Students might not always observe this connection and potentially might develop certain apathy towards learning, or lack realization of the influence they might have not just on the delivery mode, but on the course content itself. Needless to say that these sentiments might have the most damaging consequences for learners self-perceived autonomy, essential for learner empowerments and establishments of an egalitarian dialogue, and ability to bring about a meaningful change, effectively enhancing their learning experiences, making them more needs-sensitive and learner-centered.

In this research, the degree of students' perceived ability to influence course delivery or content was reflected in terms of indicated percentage to which their feedback could or should impact course delivery and content. The question put to the interviewees was, "To what extend do you expect your teacher to design the course content according to your comments?" Answers generally fell under three categories. The first group of students, which were a minority, believed

students have almost no say (the student reported “1 %”) on course content. “I think the question should be about what I have learned that day. It has no relationship with the next lecture”, reported Student H. The design and delivery of the course content are thus the teacher’s responsibility, and does not appear to be perceived within the domain of students’ influence. The second and third groups constituted the overwhelming majority. These two groups largely agreed that students should have some say about the course on the whole—some indicated that students’ suggestions could be implemented up to 20%-40%, referring to the perceived impossibility to alter the course content or learning objectives:

The teacher won’t change the structure of content, but the way it is taught. (Student B)

The course outline has been developed and followed for a decade, students may not know what is most suitable for them. (Student A)

I don’t leave comments about the course structure. I just write what I have learned. (Student D)

The extent of perceived students’ ability to influence course delivery has risen to 50% among some of the interviewees in this group. However, just like the previous group, students referred to mostly delivery of the course rather than content:

Teachers need to respond to our feedback but not just rely on our feedback [...] the professionals know better what students *should* learn. (Student E)

The third, relatively small group, with 70% of perceived students’ influence on

teacher’s decisions in designing the course content, expected a less confined context of learning for more exploration and are generally more ambitious in their learning goals:

I think we can learn more. [...] I expect to learn more [...] this semester is deeper but not many new things. [...] actually I think that in the first semester, we have learnt a lot. For example, basically we focused on the academic style. And this semester focuses on research. But each week we go deeper. The change from [course name A] to [course name B] is really small. For example, in 1013 we have to write essays and this semester is the same. The only difference is just the word count. It is not that different. (Student G)

Perceived lack of confidence among most of the interviewees in their ability to have a meaningful impact on the course design raises an important concern related to students’ belief in their abilities as active agents of change, taking responsibility for their learning, which arguably leads to development of life learning skills spreading far beyond the actual classroom. Thus it appears that only through building up students’ confidence in communication through implementation of egalitarian communication practices, ensuring relevance of courses to students’ lived experiences, and raising their awareness of effective learning strategies through establishing channels of communication between teachers and students it is possible to expect development of autonomy among learners.

### 3.5 Recommendations

In light of the findings and analysis

provided above, the implementation of CSF appears to be a complex process which requires genuine desire to communicate, listen and be heard on behalf of both teachers and students, all components being essential to materialization of I-Thou dialogue and fostering autonomy in educational context. It is important to make sure that in case formative student feedback is implemented it is not getting confused with summative feedback administrated at the end of the course, when students are not always aware of the changes initiated by their suggestions. It is essential that feedback is collected and responded to regularly and students are aware that changes are made based on their suggestions, and if change is impossible, it is important to communicate and discuss this with students to increase sense of ownership of the learning process. Closure of the feedback loop thus is a vital component of CSF

and classroom interaction and should be rigorously observed and implemented in application of this practice. To make sure that CSF facilitates meaningful interaction between teachers and students, it is vital to ensure that there is variety of questions asked in the feedback forms, both specific and general, with some open-ended questions to give students an opportunity to express their views outside of the framework imposed by the presented questionnaires. Above all, it is crucial to ensure that students are encouraged to critique classroom discourses and provide constructive criticism in order to avoid excessive compliance (Kaplan & Assor, 2010) in the process of communication, as this undoubtedly has the most damaging consequences for the implementation of an egalitarian teacher-student dialogue and fostering of independence and autonomy in learning.

## 4. Conclusion

Implementation of CSF practices is an effective tool that helps students reveal their voice, make their needs and perceptions more explicit to teachers and facilitate the implementation of a visible change in course delivery. Teachers' critical analysis of the feedback provided and consequent action upon this feedback is the crucial step in CSF loop when students observe the effect their feedback has had on course delivery. Presence of the closure of the feedback loop thus serves as the evidence of reciprocation on teachers' part and empowers students' voice through demonstrating that their attempt in

exercising agency has had a concrete effect on teaching and learning practices occurring in the classroom. In terms of theoretical perspective, CSF appears to be an effective way of implementing the principles of Freirean praxis and Buber's I-Thou dialogue, however, there are a number of limitations to be taken into account, such as students' lack of confidence in their abilities to influence course delivery and their self-perception as "objectified" participants of the course, thus not necessarily seeing themselves as having a say in terms of what is being taught and how. This, together with the need of in-

creasing the relevance of the course content to students appears to be a worthwhile direction for further research, as well as investigating how CSF can positively affect students' engagement with the course and result in more sense of ownership and personal investment in the learning process, which are important aspects in fostering autonomy and life-long learning among students.

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