

The role of self and identity in motivating learners  
of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in  
Ireland

**Ph.D. Thesis**

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## Declaration\_\_\_\_\_

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## Summary

This thesis investigates the role of self and identity in the Chinese language learning motivation. It proposes an approach where equal weight is given to social context and psychological factors in the inquiry of the relation between self-identity and motivation. In particular, SLA researchers either focus on the cognitive aspects of motivation, which often see self-identity and motivation are relatively stable variables, or accentuated the process in which language learners deploy their agency to negotiate with their learning environment. While these two approaches to motivation are very different, these researchers are both interested in how learners' perception of themselves is related to second/foreign language learning. Recently, some researchers in the field began to bring together some seemingly incompatible concepts in order to better understand the association between self-identity and motivation. Some other researchers also encourage socio-cultural oriented scholars to give more emphasis of psychological factors in their research, and vice versa. This project is one of such attempts, which draws on different theories to tease in what way the interplay among social and psychological factors, as well as human agency influence language learning motivation. Nonetheless, since many theories that see self-identity as a crucial factor for language learning motivation were in fact built upon the data collected from the learning English as a second/foreign language context. Therefore, this study chose to investigate an emerging non-English language, Mandarin Chinese, to examine if self and identity is equally critical when the learners' target language is different (i.e., non-English).

In chapter 1, I will present the rationale and aims of this study, as well as the outline of the theoretical framework of the current study. research questions and the methodology used in the current study respectively will also be outlined to give readers an overview of the thesis.

In chapter 2, I will review the literature on some of the most important motivational theories in SLA over the past few decades, then, I will discuss how self and identity became the centres of many research projects and the challenges of using the concepts of self and identity in motivation research. I will then introduce a theory proposed by Mercer (2015, 2016) that can potentially bridge the gap between the very different understanding and approaches to self and identity in SLA. At the end of Chapter 2, I present the theoretical framework used for the analyses of the qualitative data.

Chapter 3 details the objective, design, methodology, data collection procedures and analytical tools used in the current study. A rarely used statistical technique, cluster analysis, is also introduced in this chapter. The purpose of it is to let readers have rough idea about the technique before proceeding to chapter 4, where the findings of the questionnaire survey is presented.

Chapter 4 presents the data and the findings of the questionnaire survey. The first half of the chapter involves the findings yielded using descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas the second half of this chapter focuses on the output of the cluster analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the data and findings of the longitudinal case studies. This part conceptualises self and identity as a complex system characterised as the interplay among social context, psychological structure and agency. I also highlight the importance of capital, the form and amount of resources that one can draw on to change their surrounding, in the development of the Ideal L2 self.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of this thesis. I will first recapitulate the essence of the research findings in this study. Then, I will turn to the contribution and limitations of this study. Lastly, I will suggest some future directions of research based on the findings of this study.

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# Table of contents

## Contents

Table of contents.....	iv
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1 The rationale and aims of the study.....	1
1.1.1 The dominance of English.....	1
1.1.2 Theoretical challenges.....	2
1.2 Previous literature on Chinese learning motivation.....	3
1.3 Theoretical overview.....	5
1.4 Research questions.....	6
1.5 Methodological approach.....	7
1.6 The arrangement of this thesis.....	7
<b>Chapter 2: Motivation and Self-identity in second language acquisition (SLA)</b> .....	9
2.1 Introduction.....	9
2.2 The four stages of theoretical development in Second Language Acquisition motivation.....	10
2.2.1. The social psychological period (1959-1990).....	10
2.2.2. Cognitive psychological period.....	12
2.2.3. Process-Oriented Period.....	13
2.3 The self and Identity in SLA motivational research.....	14
2.3.1 A Poststructuralist approach to identity and SLA motivation.....	15
2.3.2 L2 Motivational Self System: The self and identity in mainstream SLA motivation research.....	18
2.3.3 The Poststructuralist approach to identity and L2 Motivational Self System: Some common ground.....	20
2.4 Challenges of the self and identity facing motivation researchers in SLA and the solutions being put forward.....	23
2.4.1 Terminological challenge.....	23
2.4.2 Conceptual challenge.....	24
2.4.3 Integrating different components of self: Conceptualising self as a dynamic system.....	26
2.4.4 Reconciliation of different views on agency.....	28
2.4.5 Identity negotiation and capital: weaving agency, mental process and social contexts together.....	29
2.5 The theoretical approach of this study.....	30
2.5.1 An overview of the theoretical approach to this study.....	31



2.5.2 Communities of practice .....	32
2.5.3 The importance of resources: Bourdieu’s concept of capital.....	37
2.5.4 Possible selves.....	39
2.6 Chapter summary .....	41
<b>Chapter 3: Research Design .....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	43
3.2 The objectives of this study.....	43
3.3 Research design .....	47
3.4 Sample Population .....	48
3.5 Research Instruments.....	48
3.5.1 Questionnaire .....	48
3.5.2 The final version of the questionnaire.....	50
3.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews .....	51
3.6 The recruitment of participants.....	52
3.6.1 Recruiting respondents for the questionnaire survey.....	52
3.6.2 Recruiting the focal participants for the longitudinal semi-structured interviews.....	53
3.7 The analytical techniques for the questionnaire survey in the current study.....	54
3.7.1 Cluster analysis.....	54
3.7.2 Hierarchical cluster analysis.....	55
3.7.3 K-mean clustering.....	59
3.7.4 Challenges of using cluster analysis and the approach in this study.....	60
3.7.5: Five steps of clustering and evaluation taken in the current study .....	61
3.8 The analytical techniques for the semi-structured interviews: Narrative inquiry .....	64
3.8.1 What is narrative and narrative inquiry.....	64
3.8.2 Two types of narrative inquiry: Analysis of narrative and narrative analysis.....	64
3.8.3 This study.....	66
3.9 Chapter summary .....	67
<b>Chapter 4: Findings of the survey.....</b>	<b>69</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	69
4.2 Internal reliability and normality of the constructs (variables).....	69
4.3 Research question 1a: The overall motivational orientations of the participants .....	72
4.3.1 Motivational orientations of the learners .....	72
4.3.3 The self-concepts in the study .....	74
4.3.4 The learners’ Intended effort.....	75

4.4 The motivational factors and intended effort .....	75
4.5 Gender difference in various aspects of motivation and intended effort .....	78
4.5.1 Ratings .....	78
4.5.2 Summary.....	81
4.6. Do learners of different proficiency levels have different attitudes and self-concepts .....	81
4.6.1 The participants' proficiency level in relation to the attitudinal variables.....	82
4.6.2 The three proficiency groups' self-concepts.....	86
4.6.3 Summary.....	87
4.6.4 Are learners of different levels motivated by different factors?.....	87
4.7 An exploratory approach: using cluster analysis in this study.....	92
4.7.1 Choosing an optimal clustering solution .....	92
4.7.2 Summarising the clustering procedure .....	95
4.8 The characteristics of the final clustering (External validity) .....	97
4.8.1 The characteristics of the two groups and their intended effort .....	97
4.8.2 The motivators of the two groups .....	98
4.8.3 Explaining the disparities between the inferential statistics and the cluster analysis.....	99
4.9 Chapter summary.....	102
<b>Chapter 5: Findings of the longitudinal case studies .....</b>	<b>104</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	104
5.2 Using the data .....	105
5.2 The learners' communities of practice .....	105
5.3 Sarah: a motivated learner with strong Ideal L2 selves.....	107
5.3.1 Sarah's learning history and her Ideal L2 self.....	107
5.3.2 Sarah's participation in the two communities of practice.....	108
5.3.3 The effect of capital on Sarah's participation in the community of practice.....	110
5.3.4 the interplay among community of practice, capital, possible selves and motivation.....	112
5.4 Tim: a strong ideal L2 self with weak motivation.....	114
5.4.1 Tim's learning history and his Ideal L2 self .....	115
5.4.2 Tim's participation in the two communities of practice.....	117
5.4.3 The effect of capital on Tim's participation in the communities of practice .....	119
5.4.4 The interplay among communities of practice, capital, possible selves and its effect on motivation .....	120
5.5 Alba: an intermediate learner who struggled to develop an ideal L2 self .....	121
5.5.1 Alba's learning history and the (lack of) development of her Ideal L2 self .....	121

5.5.2 Alba's participation in the two communities of practice .....	123
5.5.3 The effect of capital on Alba's participation in the community of practice .....	126
5.5.4 The interplay among Alba's participation in the community of practice, capital and possible selves on Alba's learning motivation .....	127
5.6 Chapter summary and discussion .....	128
5.6.1 Summarising the three cases .....	129
5.6.2 Answering the research questions .....	131
<b>Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>133</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	133
6.2 Discussion of findings in relation to research questions .....	134
6.2.1 Research question 1.....	135
6.2.2 Research question 2 .....	135
6.2.3 Research question 3 .....	137
6.3 The findings of this study in relation to the literature in motivation research .....	138
6.4 The contribution of this study.....	139
6.5 Limitations of this study.....	140
6.6 Future research directions.....	142
6.7 Conclusion.....	142
Bibliography: .....	144
Appendix 1: The finalised questionnaire for learners of Chinese: .....	154
Appendix 2: Alba's first interview transcript .....	162
Appendix 3: Alba's second interview transcript .....	166
Appendix 4: Alba's third interview transcript.....	177
Appendix 5: Sarah's first interview.....	180
Appendix 6 Sarah's second interview transcript.....	187
Appendix 7: Sarah's third interview transcript .....	194
Appendix 8: Tim's first interview transcript .....	198
Appendix 9: Tim's second interview transcript.....	203
Appendix 10: Tim's third interview transcript .....	212
Appendix 12: Keys for Jefferson transcription symbols used in the study .....	226
Appendix 13: Participant Information Leaflet .....	227

## Lists of Figures

<b>FIGURE 1 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK IN THIS STUDY</b> .....	6
FIGURE 2 NESTED SYSTEMS OF SELF-IDENTITY PROPOSED BY DAVIS AND SUMARA (2006) AND ADAPTED BY MERCER (2015, P. 141).....	27
FIGURE 3 DISTANCES MEASURES IN HIERARCHICAL CLUSTER ANALYSIS .....	56
FIGURE 4 DENDROGRAM (WARD’S METHOD) GENERATED USING THE DATA IN THE CURRENT STUDY (THREE CLUSTER SOLUTION) .....	57
FIGURE 5 DENDROGRAM (WARD’S METHOD) GENERATED USING THE DATA IN THE CURRENT STUDY (FOUR COLOUR SOLUTION).....	58
FIGURE 6 SCREE-PLOT GENERATED USING THE DATA IN THE CURRENT STUDY (WARD’S METHOD)...	59
<b>FIGURE 7: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE IDEAL L2 SELF AND PROFICIENCY LEVEL</b> .....	91
<b>FIGURE 8 THE TWO CLUSTERS’ MOTIVATIONAL PROFILE</b> .....	98
<b>FIGURE 9 SARAH’S SELF-REPORTED MOTIVATIONAL CHANGE SINCE LATE 2010 (THE TIME SHE STARTED LEARNING MANDARIN CHINESE)</b> .....	114
FIGURE 10 TIM’S CHANGE IN MOTIVATION BETWEEN 2013 (THE YEAR HE STARTED LEARNING MANDARIN CHINESE) AND 2017.....	118

## Lists of Tables

<b>TABLE 1 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE CURRENT STUDY AND THEIR CORRESPONDING RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS AND ANALYTICAL TOOLS .....</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>TABLE 2 PROFILES OF THE THREE PARTICIPANTS .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>TABLE 3 THE COMPOSITION OF EACH CONSTRUCT AND THE CRONBACH'S ALPHA COEFFICIENT OF THEM.....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>TABLE 4 THE MAJOR REASONS FOR THE PARTICIPANTS TO LEARN MANDARIN CHINESE.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>TABLE 5 MEANS SCORE OF THE MOTIVATIONAL FACTORS .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>TABLE 6 CORRELATION MATRIX FOR ALL SCALE VARIABLES IN THIS STUDY.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>TABLE 7 THE MOTIVATIONAL RATINGS OF DIFFERENT CONSTRUCTS BROKEN DOWN BY GENDER</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>TABLE 8 CORRELATION MATRIX FOR ALL SCALE VARIABLES IN THIS STUDY BROKEN DOWN BY GENDER .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>TABLE 9 THE PARTICIPANTS' RATINGS ON ATTITUDE-RELATED VARIABLES BROKEN BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL.....</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>TABLE 10 THE PARTICIPANTS' RATINGS ON SELF-RELATED CONCEPTS AND INTENDED EFFORT BROKEN BY PROFICIENCY LEVEL .....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>TABLE 11 CORRELATION BETWEEN MOTIVATING FACTORS AND INTENDED EFFORT BROKEN DOWN BY PROFICIENCY LEVELS.....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>TABLE 12 A COMPLETE LIST OF POSSIBLE CLUSTER-SOLUTIONS AND THEIR AVERAGE SILHOUETTE WIDTH (SILHOUETTE COEFFICIENT).....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>TABLE 13 SEVEN TYPES OF INFORMATION THAT RESEARCHERS SHOULD REPORT ON USING CLUSTER ANALYSIS (BASED ON THE ADVICE OF ALDENDERFER AND BLASHFIELD (1984) AND HAIR AND COLLEAGUES (2013) .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>TABLE 14 THE TWO GROUPS' MEANS SCORES ON THE SIX VARIABLES CLUSTERED .....</b>	<b>97</b>
<b>TABLE 15 CORRELATION MATRIX OF MOTIVATION FACTORS FOR GROUP ONE AND GROUP 2.....</b>	<b>99</b>
<b>TABLE 16 GROUP MEMBERSHIP OF THE FINAL CLUSTER IN RELATION TO PROFICIENCY LEVEL</b>	<b>101</b>



# Chapter 1: Introduction

This study sets out to investigate what motivates learners of Mandarin Chinese in Ireland to learn the language. It focuses on the role of the Ideal L2 self in providing impetus for foreign language learners in their learning. Ideal L2 self is a term drawn from Higgins' self-discrepancy theory (1987) and Markus and Nurius's theory of possible selves (1986) by Dörnyei (2005, 2009). Ideal self is defined by Higgins as "representation of an individual's beliefs about his or her own or a significant other's hopes, wishes, or aspirations for the individual" (Higgin, 1987, p.319). Dörnyei (2005) draws on ideal self and coined the term of the *Ideal L2 self* to denote one's second/foreign language (L2) specific hopes and aspirations that one would like to achieve in the future. Dörnyei proposes that this L2 specific Ideal self is a strong motivator for one to make effort to learn a second/foreign language, it is because psychological theories (e.g., Carver and Scheier, 1990; Duval and Wicklund, 1972 and Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982) suggest that people are motivated to minimise the distance between one's actual self (or current self) and their goals in order to reduce the uneasiness caused by the discrepancies.

While Dörnyei's notion of *self* is largely a psychological concept, recent theoretical development in psychology and applied linguistics began to see *self* from a dynamic perspective. In particular, more and more theorists have conceptualised *self* as a system characterised as a complex interplay among affective, cognitive, social and agentic factors (e.g., Mercer, 2016; Morf and Mischel, 2012 and Oyserman et al., 2012). In other words, if *self* is crucial to second/foreign language motivation, one cannot solely focus on the psychological aspect of the concept if second/foreign language motivation is to be understood thoroughly. In this introductory chapter, I will present the research rationale, theoretical basis, research design and the methodological approach of this study.

## 1.1 The rationale and aims of the study

The current study was conducted with the intention of adding to the literature in Chinese learning motivation and to bridge the gap between the sociocultural and psychological perspectives on motivation in second/foreign language acquisition (SLA).

### 1.1.1 The dominance of English

According to a systematic literature review published in 2015 (Boo, Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015), over 70% of the motivation research published between 2005 and 2014 were conducted in the setting of learning English as a second/foreign language. Therefore, Mandarin Chinese is obviously one of the underrepresented languages. However, this underrepresentation is not merely a quantitative issue, but also a qualitative one. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2017) point out that recent motivation theories in SLA were developed based on the analyses of learning English as a second/foreign language. Unlike other languages, where learners would associate the language with the speaking community and the native speakers of those languages, English nowadays is seen as a basic skill just like "reading, writing and

mathematics” (ibid, p.451) in many school systems. This conceptual difference between English (as a basic skill) and other languages (often associated with a specific community and/or culture) means that theories built up on the data elicited from an English learning setting may not apply to the learning of other languages. In the past ten years, Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009) has been decidedly the most influential theoretical model in SLA motivation (Rose, 2016). Central to the model is the notion of the Ideal L2 self, Ought to L2 self and learners’ attitude to learning experience. As the two selves in the model, especially the Ideal L2 self, have proven to be closely associated with motivation in many studies where English was the language in question (e.g., Ryan, 2009; Taguchi et al., 2009 and You and Dörnyei, 2016), this study aims to investigate if the Ideal L2 self is also a strong motivator for language learners in the setting of learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language, and this inquiry constitutes the first part of the study.

### **1.1.2 Theoretical challenges**

In fact, the concept of *self* is not only at the centre of attention for those who take a psychological approach to motivation (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), but also a research focus among researchers who take a sociocultural approach to the examination of motivation. However, intra-disciplinary communication between researchers from the two perspectives is relatively rare (Zuengler and Miller, 2006). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) point out that it is crucial for motivation researchers to overcome this rather “schizophrenic” situation (p.355) for the field to grow. This brings us to the discussion of the second aim of this study, bridging the gap between these two approaches to motivation in SLA.

One of the challenges that poses an obstacle for the convergence of the sociocultural and psychological perspectives on self, identity and motivation is that although self and identity seem to be two very similar (if not identical) ideals, researchers from these two perspectives often take very different approaches to self and identity. Looking at articles where *self* and *identity* are at the centre of research agendas, one would find that these two words seem to denote two different concepts. Specifically, self is often portrayed as a psychological construct, or one’s mental representations of himself/herself, which also appears to be quite stable over time (Henry, 2015); whereas identity seems to denote one’s social positions or relation to others, and therefore socially situated (Norton, 2000). However, when these two terms appear together, it is often not clear which concept is being discussed. For example, in the concluding chapter of Dörnyei and Ushioda’s anthology of conceptual and empirical papers on *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, the editors (2009, p.350) note that:

It seems that motivation conceived as part of the learners’ identity/self is a workable concept from several perspectives [.....].

In the same article, they also hold that:

Drawing on the traditions of quantitative social psychology, the majority of Dörnyei’s work has focused on presumed motivational universals aggregated from large samples groups, whereas



Ushioda was attracted right from the beginning to a situated, qualitative, interpretive approach, viewing motivation as part of the individual learner's thought processes. This book owes its existence to the fact that in it we found a common denominator: *identity* and the *self* [.....]. (emphases theirs)

Given that *self* is conceptualised as mental representations and often used in cognitive-oriented articles and identity is defined as one's social relations and often the choice of word in sociocultural oriented papers (Oyserman et al., 2012), what the common denominator means in the aforementioned quotation is, unfortunately, not clear. In fact, some recent theorising of self and identity sees that self and identity should be conceptualised as different components of the same system. For example, Oyserman and colleagues (2012) see self-concept and identity as components of the system of *self*. They propose that these three components are nested into each other, where self is a relatively stable *feeling* that we know who we are, and identity is the least stable and most socially situated one. Although the terminologies vary from framework to framework, psychologists generally agree that *self* is a system, which is both stable and unstable, routine (due to social and psychological constraints) and agentic (Morf and Mischel, 2012). This integrative approach potentially solves some conflicting views on self and identity in SLA, which may also serve to connect the two perspectives in SLA that are rather isolated from each other, at least in the area of motivation research. Indeed, Mercer (2011, 2015 and 2016) has recently integrated different self-concepts in SLA and examined self and motivation from the perspectives that self is a complex dynamic system. In her theorisation, *self* is the product of the interaction among agency, social context and psychological structure of human cognition.

Taking the recent theorisation of self-and identity as a starting point, the second part of this study aims to understand the effect of the interaction among self, identity, social context and psychological factors on foreign language learners' motivation.

## 1.2 Previous literature on Chinese learning motivation

Many previous studies on Mandarin Chinese learning motivation appear to have drawn on theories that are psychologically oriented. For example, Wen's (1997) project compares the difference in motivation between beginner and intermediate learners using Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Their analysis showed that intrinsic motivation and the presumption of Chinese being a less demanding subject are the major reasons for heritage learners to enrol in an elementary Chinese course. However, the students at the intermediate level were only driven by the presumption that a high grade in the Chinese class can be achieved with little effort, but not by intrinsic motivation (1997, p.241-242). Another example is that Yu (2010) adopted Gardner's socio-educational model (1985) to examine 215 international students' motivation during their 9-month learning period in China.

Three studies are found to which self or identity were central. Cai and Zhu (2012) investigated 44 university students' motivation in the United States using L2-motivational self system as their theoretical framework. The researchers were interested to see if the students' motivation would change

after joining an online Chinese learning community project. They found that the students' Ideal L2 self and Ought to L2 self did not change after the programme, yet the learners' ratings on learning experience were significantly higher after the programme.

Using a qualitative method, Thompson and Vásquez's (2015) research drew on Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009) and the construct of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966) to probe into three successful L2 learners' motivation. The learner of Chinese, Alex, built up his ideal L2 identity as a successful language learner through psychological reactance: exerting to achieve tasks perceived as impossible by others (Thompson and Va'squez, 2015, p.167). In particular, Alex became more perseverant after his Chinese teaching assistant attempted to ask him to quit Chinese as he was deemed as not talented (2015, p.166). He also refused to take on an identity as a bad language learner by attributing his failure in learning French and Spanish at school to the school teachers' incompetency to teach (2015, p.165). While Dörnyei's construct of ideal L2 self focuses on individual and learners themselves, particularly on one's ability to visualise their ideal self in the future, Thompson and Va'squez's study highlighted the importance of 'other' in the process of shaping an ideal L2 self (2015, p.170).

Unlike the aforementioned studies, which primarily employed psychological constructs and theories to examine motivation, Lantolf and Genung (2002) emphasised the dynamic nature between psychological and sociocultural factors. Specifically, the researchers adopted Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 1999; Leonti'ev, 1981) to investigate how one's history and experience shape one's language learning identity, and how the incongruence between identities and learning environment led to changes in goals and learning behaviour. The study analysed the second author of the study (Genung)'s experience as a learner of Chinese. Although passing the Chinese course was a requirement for her PhD degree, her initial priority was to learn the language well. Genung's background as a PhD candidate in linguistics, a former high-ranking member in the U.S. military, and a successful language learner have shaped her as a confident person who is willing to challenge herself (2002, p.179). Nonetheless, her background and experience and her instructor's teaching style were mismatched, because the instructor taught in the way that is perceived by the author as disrespectful of the students (2002, p.186). The reliance on drillings in the class instead of a communication-oriented way of teaching, a method that the learner was more familiar with, was also a bone of contention (2002, p.183). It is also noted that the authors highlight the importance of institutionalized power: Despite Genung's efforts, such as bringing her disappointment to the attention of the course coordinator, no noticeable changes happened. Subsequently, Genung chose to go along with the instructor's way of teaching in order to fulfil her academic requirement.

Except Lantolf and Genung's (2002) study, the self and identity centred studies mentioned above all treated self-and-identity-related concepts as psychological variables by and large independent of social

structure. While it has been mentioned that self should be seen as a complex dynamic system where agency, social context and psychological structure of human cognition are constantly interacting with each other (Mercer, 2015, 2016), social factors must be taken into account if the relations between self, identity and motivation are to be better understood.

### 1.3 Theoretical overview

As mentioned in the preceding sections, this study aims to understand the motivation of learners of Mandarin Chinese in Ireland, with particular focus going to the investigation of the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation. Therefore, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) will be used. Regarding the second aim of the study (i.e., investigating the effect of the interplay among self-identity, social factors and psychological structure (e.g., emotion, sense of being in control) on learners' motivation), three different yet compatible theories will be drawn on, namely communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and Bourdieu's notion of capital (1986).

In particular, researchers from both psychological (e.g., Dörnyei) and sociocultural (e.g., Norton) backgrounds propose that motivated learners often imagine themselves using their target language in a setting they would like to be, or in a role they would like to become. I use the framework of communities of practice to understand how the learners take initiatives (or which is called participation in the framework of communities of practice) to achieve their linguistic and non-linguistic goals. As how likely one could successfully achieve their goals at least partly depends on the amount of resources they could capitalise on, I will tease out what kind of resources the learners mobilise during the process they work hard to achieve their goals in terms of the four forms of capital outlined in Bourdieu's seminal work: *the forms of capital* (1986). Then, I will use the theory of possible selves (1986) to explain retrospectively why the learners are motivated or not motivated. Specifically, the theory of possible selves proposes that there are some conditions to be fulfilled if possible selves (one's aspiration to become someone they want to become) are to be turned into motivation. I will compare the learners' experience against these conditions and give an explanation why the learners behave in a certain way. The analytical framework is visualised as the following schema:

**Figure 1 The theoretical framework in this study**

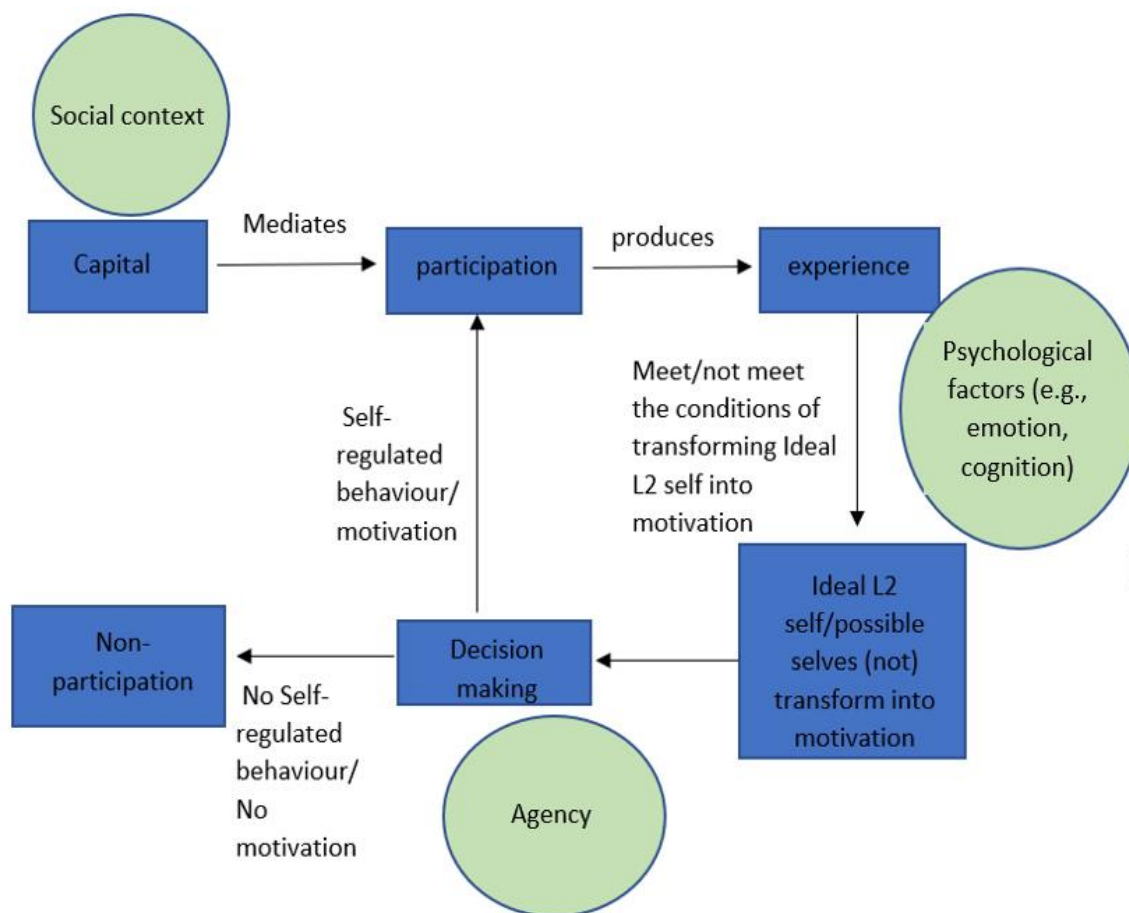


Figure 1.1 is a schema that represents the conceptualisation that motivation is the result of the interplay between social context, psychological structure and human agency. Using Bourdieu’s concept of capital, I examine the role of capital in mediating learners’ participation in the communities of practice. Their participation will produce experience, which will be evaluated through the lens of possible selves. Possible selves theory proposes that, for example, if an individual perceives a possible self (in this case, ideal L2 self) as not plausible, ideal L2 self will not be transformed into motivation. However, at the end it is the individual’s decision to make whether they will choose to participate in the communities of practice again, or not to participate. A more comprehensive analysis using the three theories will be presented in chapter 5.

#### 1.4 Research questions

In section 1.1, I have argued that two issues prompt to the start of this study, which are the dominance of English in SLA motivation literature and the disorganised conceptualisation of self and identity in motivation research. In section 1.2, I presented that previous studies on learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language have not sufficiently addressed the issues mentioned in section 1.1, therefore, a new approach to the investigation of the relation between self, identity and motivation is needed. With all

these issues in mind, the researcher of the current study aims to attend to two broad areas: 1) what is the role of the Ideal L2 self in the setting of learning Chinese as a second/foreign language. 2) the effect of the interplay among self and identity, social factors and psychological structure (e.g., emotion, sense of being in control) on learners' motivation. These two areas of inquiry are formulated into the following research questions:

- 1) What are the motivation for the participants of this study to learn Chinese?
  - 1a. What were the overall motivational orientation of the participants?
  - 1b. What were the prime motivator(s) for the learners to make effort to their Chinese learning?
- 2) Are different groups motivated by different reasons?
  - 2a. What is the effect of gender on the ratings on motivational factors, ideal L2 self and learners' intended effort (if there is any gender effect, the discussion will focus on the ideal L2 self)?
  - 2b. Do more competent learners of Chinese demonstrate a stronger ideal L2 self and greater intended effort?
  - 2c. Can an exploratory statistical approach, cluster analysis, give more insight to question 2a and 2b?
- 3) Why do some learners successfully develop their Ideal L2 selves, but some learners' Ideal L2 selves are relatively weak?
  - 3a. What is the role of capital in the process of negotiating the ideal L2 self?
  - 3b. What was the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation?

## 1.5 Methodological approach

To answer the research questions listed in section 1.3, mixed methodology was adopted. A quantitative approach is used to answer questions 1 and 2, and a qualitative approach is employed to answer questions 3. The quantitative approach mainly analyses numerical data using inferential statistical techniques and an exploratory statistical method (cluster analysis) the data to be analysed using this approach is elicited by a cross-sectional survey, where a questionnaire is the instrument of the research. The qualitative approach entails a longitudinal case study, the data of this part of the research was collected by means of a series of longitudinal semi-structured interviews. Three focal learners who also took part in the survey are the source of the data.

## 1.6 The arrangement of this thesis

In the previous few sections, I have presented the rationale and aims of this study (section 1.1). Then, I have showed that previous studies on Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language have not fully captured the nature of self and identity (1.2). In section 1.3, I have outlined the theoretical framework of the current study and presented a schema to visualise the conceptual relation between psychological

structure, agency and social context. Sections 1.4 and 1.5 outlined the research questions and the methodology used in the current study respectively.

In chapter 2, I will review the literature on some of the most important motivational theories in SLA over the past few decades, then, I will discuss how self and identity became the centres of many research projects and the challenges of using the concepts of self and identity in motivation research. I will then introduce a theory proposed by Mercer (2015, 2016) that can potentially bridge the gap between the very different understandings and approaches to self and identity in SLA. At the end of Chapter 2, I will present the theoretical framework used for the analyses of the qualitative data.

Chapter 3 details the objective, design, methodology, data collection procedures and analytical tools used in the current study. A rarely used statistical technique, cluster analysis, is also introduced in this chapter. The purpose of it is to let readers have a rough idea about the technique before proceeding to chapter 4, where the findings of the questionnaire survey are presented.

Chapter 4 presents the data and the findings of the questionnaire survey. The first half of the chapter involves the findings yielded using descriptive and inferential statistics, whereas the second half of this chapter focuses on the outputs of the cluster analysis.

Chapter 5 presents the data and findings of the longitudinal case studies. This part conceptualises self and identity as a complex system characterised as the interplay among social context, psychological structure and agency. I will also highlight the importance of capital, the form and amount of resources that one can draw on to change their surroundings, in the development of the Ideal L2 self.

Chapter 6 is the concluding chapter of this thesis. I will first recapitulate the essence of the research findings in this study. Then, I will turn to the contribution and limitations of this study. Lastly, I will suggest some future directions of research based on the findings of this study.

## **Chapter 2: Motivation and Self-identity in second language acquisition (SLA)**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the theoretical development of motivation in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The definition of motivation in the field of psychology varies greatly over the years. In the early stage, Maslow (1943) defined motivation as basic needs for survival, such as hunger or safety, as well as psychological needs such as belonging and accomplishment. Skinner (1953) conceptualised it as a mechanism to avoid negative outcomes and to gain benefits by performing desired behaviour and extinguishing unwanted behaviour. More recently, motivation in psychology is generally referred to as the study of the reasons for people behaving in a certain way (Graham and Weiner, 1996). Although the exploration of the relationship between psychological factors and language learning started before the 1950s (e.g., Arsenian, 1945; Marckwardt, 1948), it was Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert's studies (1959, 1972) in Canada that brought motivation to the attention of researchers in the field of Second Language Acquisition, or SLA (Dörnyei, 2005, p.250). From the outset, Gardner and Lambert aimed to establish the relationship among second language learners' attitudes, motivation and their second language achievement (Gardner, 2001). Although the foci of studies on motivation has had a sea change since the late 1950s, Lambert and Gardner's efforts undoubtedly laid a foundation for more sophisticated discussion on the relationship among motivation, affective factors and second language learning in the past few decades. Therefore, the review on Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (1972, 1985) will mark the starting point of this chapter. For this reason, section 2.2 sketches out the theoretical development of SLA motivation from the late 1950s up until the late 1990s based on Dörnyei's (2005) taxonomy. Section 2.3 focuses on the relationship between the self and identity and SLA motivation, since identity and the self have been at the centre of many research agendas in the field since the mid-2000s. Despite the robustness of research on the self and identity in SLA, some researchers see that the ambiguous use of the terminologies and the proliferation of self and identity related concepts may undercut the explanatory power of terms (e.g., Block, 2007, 2009, MacIntyre et al., 2009 and Williams and Mercer, 2014). As a result, theorists began to re-conceptualise the constructs. Section 2.3 is an outline of two recent reconceptualization of the self and identity proposed by Darvin and Norton (2015) and Mercer (2015, 2016). The last section of this chapter (section 2.4) introduces two concepts from sociology and social psychology: Pierre Bourdieu's Capital (1986, 1990) and Swann and Bosson's Identity negotiation (2008). Along with Dörnyei's concept of the Ideal L2 self, these two concepts were exploited to complement the analysis of the qualitative data in the current study.

## 2.2 The four stages of theoretical development in Second Language Acquisition motivation

Since motivation was introduced to Second Language Acquisition in the late 1950s, the number of theories has multiplied. Although the robustness of discussion on the topic of SLA motivation result in the theoretically diverse frameworks, some similarities could be drawn among them. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2011) observe that the development of motivation theories in SLA is a process that has been moving closer toward mainstream psychological perspectives while retaining elements unique to language learning. They also classified theories of SLA motivation from the late 1950s to the late 1990 into the following four phases:

1. The social psychological period (1959 - early1990) – represented by Gardner and his colleagues' work in Canada.
2. The cognitive-situated period (during the 1990s) – a period in which motivation research often drew on cognitive theories in educational psychology.
3. The process-oriented period (the late 1990s and at the turn of the 21st century) – motivational change is at the centre of researchers' attention.
4. The socio-dynamic period (mid-2000s - current)

### 2.2.1. The social psychological period (1959-1990)

Lambert and Gardner's approach to investigating second language learners' motivation since 1959 evolved into a systematic framework which Gardner later referred to as socio-educational model (Gardner, 1985, p.146). Since the 1970s, the constructs adopted in his theoretical framework have undergone a few modifications, yet central to the framework is always the variables of integrative motivation (will discuss later) and integrativeness.

Integrativeness is defined as 'a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community' (Gardner, 2001, p.5). The weak form of integrativeness can be understood as the respect, openness and admiration for foreign culture and ways of life; the strong form of it can be understood as a desire for becoming similar to members of another cultural community; or a total identification with the community where the second language is spoken (Gardner, 2001, p.5). A learner with the quality of Integrativeness is often receptive to and has a positive attitude toward the L2 community (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003). The connection between identifying oneself with the target language's community and linguistic proficiency lies in the nature of language acquisition. Gardner argued that language is an indispensable part of a spoken community's culture. Thus a positive attitude toward the community where the language is spoken is essential if one would persist to learn the language (Gardner, 1985).



Another decisive factor for language learning motivation is students' attitudes toward the learning situation such as learners' perception of their teachers and teaching materials. If learners perceive their learning situation positively, chances are they also have high motivation, and vice versa (1985, p.149). Integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation are proposed by Gardner as closely correlated with motivation. These three variables (Integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation) form the concept of integrative motivation. Two other supporting yet less important motivational dimensions in Gardner's model include language anxiety and instrumental motivation (2001, p.7).

At the operational level, these motivational variables are measured by the Attitude/Motivational Test Battery (AMTB). The instrument was first developed in 1970, and was modified by Gardner and a number of different researchers throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Gardner, 2001, p.7). Five variables form the core of the instrument, namely integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, instrumental orientation and language anxiety. Initially, the battery was designed for gauging English speaking Canadians' motivation for learning French as their second language. As it was getting more attention, the battery was widely used by second and foreign language researchers to probe into varied research questions, such as how motivation is associated with language achievement, language course drop-outs and language classroom behaviour (Gardner, 2001, p.10).

Although integrativeness was often found to be a significant factor in studies conducted in Canada, (Gardner, 2001, p.10), studies using the AMTB and its variations do not always yield consistent findings (Noels et al., 2003). Specifically, the central construct of the socio-educational model, integrativeness, only displays significance in the setting where a particular group forms the majority of a multicultural society (Clement and Kruidenier, 1983), and Canada is an example of such communities.

Furthermore, the causality between integrative motivation and learning outcome is also questionable. While it is acknowledged that motivation leads to achievement for it gives learners impetus to explore the nuances of their target language, the causal relationship between achievement and integrative motivation remains unclear (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991). A number of researchers raised a question that whether it is learners' language achievement that leads to their wanting to identify with the community of the L2, or the other way round (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991, p.474). Oller (1981) also asks questions about the direct link between affective factors (such as integrativeness and the desire for learning a language) and language proficiency, as the relationship between these constructs can be mediated by many confounding variables. Yashima (2002) also argued that some second language learners are unlikely to develop affections for native speakers of their L2 simply because they do not have regular contact with the speakers of their target language. Despite these dissatisfactions with Gardner's socio-educational theory, researchers do agree with the importance of motivation in SLA and the discussions on this topic continues. For instance, Clement (1980) emphasizes the importance of

Linguistic Self-Confidence in SLA motivational studies (Clement, 1980). Yashima (2002) introduces the concept of international posture to SLA motivation.

### **2.2.2. Cognitive psychological period**

The cognitive-situated period is given its name as researchers began to integrate more cognitive concepts from mainstream psychology into the studies of second language motivation. Although more attention was given to the cognitive aspects in language learning in this period, Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) emphasise that it does not mean Gardner's Socio-Educational Model was completely discarded. Another characteristic in this period is that researchers also gave more attention to the classroom setting because they believed that the classroom, or the immediate learning environment often had a great impact on learners' motivation (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011).

Self-Determination Theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000) is one of the most far-reaching theories drawn on by SLA researchers since the late 1990s. The theory is closely associated with the concept of autonomy. Two constructs form the nuclei of the theory, namely intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation entails enjoyment, actions motivated by intrinsic motivation are those that can bring pleasure to the action-takers. In contrast, extrinsic motivation is heteronomous, behaviours are driven by external forces or impositions.

According to Self-Determination Theory, intrinsic motivation is most evident when one experiences autonomy (the feeling of being self-determined), competence (or self-efficacy) and relatedness (sense of belonging and security). In other words, the absence of one of these three conditions would obstruct the development of intrinsic motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). However, in most cases, human behaviour is not driven by intrinsic motivation, but regulated by pressure from the outside. The configurations of these outside forces shape four types of extrinsic motivation or regulatory forces, namely external, introjected, identified and integrated regulation (Ryan and Deci, 2000, p.71).

Despite the semantic dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, these two types of motivation should be understood as a continuum. In particular, there are four levels of extrinsic motivation that regulate human behaviour, the higher the level, the more similar it is to intrinsic motivation: External regulation involves material rewards; introjected regulation involves the approval of significant others; identified regulation and integrated motivation<sup>1</sup> are internalised outside forces, which means they are external regulatory forces congruent with ones' personal goal (Ryan and Deci, 2006). In other words, integrated regulation is more congruent with one's personal goals than the others.

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<sup>1</sup> Not to be confused with Gardner's integrativeness and integrative motivation.

Thus, integrated regulation is in fact closer to the intrinsic end of the motivational continuum than it is to the type of motivation imposed merely from the external.

Noels and her colleagues adopted Self-Determination Theory to understand the relationship between motivation and learning behaviour. For example, Noels (2001a) found that students are less intrinsically motivated if their teachers are perceived to be unwilling to give instructive feedback. Other researchers also employ SDT instruments in an attempt to establish relationships between motivation and second language attainment. Studies have found that in the English language teaching context, extrinsic motivation often plays an important role in learners' proficiency (e.g., Chen et al, 2005; Kang, 2001; Warden and Lin, 2000).

### **2.2.3. Process-Oriented Period**

Towards the end of the 1990s, SLA researchers began to reflect on the limitations of gauging motivation using psychometric tests. As this method can only measure learners' motivation at one point in time, motivation is inevitably treated as a stable and constant variable (Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2011). This gives rise to a shift of focus from identifying a single most important trait to the development of motivation over time in SLA studies (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011).

One of the most discussed studies that investigate the stability of motivational components is Gardner and his associates' (2004) one-year longitudinal research on 197 learners of French in a university. Their study asked the question whether some variables in the Socio-Educational Model (integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, learners' language anxiety and instrumental orientation) are more likely to change than the others over the period of one year (Gardner et al., 2004). The result shows that learners' attitudes toward their learning situation is the most unstable variable, whereas integrativeness is the least (2004, p.28). On the other hand, some researchers strived to build up new theoretical models to capture the fluid nature of motivation. Dörnyei and Otto's Process Model for L2 Motivation (1998) aims to elucidate the change in motivation over time. Central to their framework is the investigation of the ebbs and flows of motivation in different learning stages, namely pre-actional phase, actional phase and post-actional phase.

The pre-actional phase can be characterised as a process of goal setting, intention formation (commitment or intended effort) and initiation of intention enactment (choosing the right moment for taking actions). Before goals are set or actions are taken, learners often evaluate how likely they can succeed and whether resources at hands allow them to launch their learning plan. These factors evaluated in the pre-actional phase will continue in the actional phase (in which the learning process starts) which would result in the modification of goals and the selection of learning strategy. The post-actional phase is a stage where students reflect on the episodes that happen in the actional phase. In this phase, students

compare their initial goals with their learning outcomes in order to make new plans, one of which is the termination of action (Dörnyei and Otto, 1998).

#### 2.2.4 Socio-dynamic period

The acknowledgement of the changeability of motivation has taken L2 motivational research into a new direction, which is termed by Dörnyei and Ushioda as the socio-dynamic period (2011). This period is often discussed alongside a wider context of the “dynamic turn” in SLA (Dörnyei et al., 2015). The emergence of this period can be seen as a response to the inadequacy of the traditional psychological approach to L2 learning motivation, and a broader field of SLA, which are now seen by many as static in their nature. In particular, the theories enumerated above all set out to search a causal relationship between motivation and few predictor variables using linear statistics. The drawback of such approach is that researchers often lose sight of the bigger social context, situational and temporal factors that hold sway over learners’ motivation. The “dynamic turn” in SLA is characterised by the emphases of motivational change and the interaction of both social (e.g., social context, learning context) and psychological factors in motivation research. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda’s (2011) categorisation, the L2 Motivational Self System (L2MSS) (Dörnyei, 2009) is an important framework in the socio-dynamic period. However, the model will be discussed in the next section, since its “dynamic” nature is somewhat disputable. For instance, Henry holds that the concept of the Ideal L2 self in Dörnyei’s model is conceptualised as a rather “static” construct as the concept is portrayed as if learners only had one single unchanged goal to be achieved (e.g., Henry, 2015, p.83).

Having said that, L2MSS is unarguably the most influential model in the past eight to ten years (Rose, 2017). L2MSS is not only influential in motivation research, but also a milestone in the self and identity related research (Kostoulas and Mercer, 2016). Since the introduction of the model to SLA, the number of motivation studies using the “self” concepts have been burgeoning (Boo et al., 2015, Kostoulas and Mercer, 2016). On the other hand, self-identity has also been at the centre of many sociocultural-oriented research projects since Norton’s (2000) seminal study was published (Block, 2007). Since self-identity is central to both influential theories (i.e., Dörnyei’s L2MSS and Norton’s poststructuralist approach, although they take a very different perspective on self-identity), these two theories are discussed together in the next section.

### 2.3 The self and Identity in SLA motivational research

The discussion of the self and identity has become omnipresent in the past few decades across all disciplines in social sciences and arts and humanities, applied linguistics is no exception. Among different domains in SLA, motivation is one of the areas that the self and identity is the most prevalent (Mercer, 2011). Kostoulas and Mercer (2016) observe that there are three milestones for the developments of the self and identity in SLA, the first one is Norton’s (2000, also Norton Pierce, 1995)

poststructuralist view on identity and its relationship with motivation in the late 1990s. The second milestone is characterised by Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System (2005, 2009). The third milestone is closely related to the recent "dynamic turn" (Dörnyei et al., 2015) in SLA, where researchers often investigate L2 motivation through the lens of complexity theory (which will not be discussed in this thesis).

### **2.3.1 A Poststructuralist approach to identity and SLA motivation**

The emergence of the poststructuralist approach to second language motivation was informed by the dissatisfaction of the dominant theories in the 1990s and early 2000s. In particular, the research foci in SLA were often on the identification of the techniques and behaviour of "good language learners" in the hopes that they can be taught to other students (Bown, 2009, p.571). For example, Naiman and colleagues (1978) found that one of such good learning behaviour is the capacity to take control of affective factors. This emphasis on learners' capacity for regulating their own learning behaviour voluntarily continues in the 1990s (Benson, 2006). For instance, Gardner and MacIntyre claim that "the major characteristic of the informal context (of second language learning) is that it is voluntary. Individuals can either participate or not in informal acquisition contexts" (1992, p.213). Norton Peirce succinctly points out the weakness of these theoretical perspectives (1995, p.11):

In the field of SLA, theorists have not adequately addressed why it is that a learner may sometimes be motivated, extroverted, and confident and sometimes unmotivated, introverted, and anxious; why in one place there may be social distance between a specific group of language learners and the target language community, whereas in another place the social distance may be minimal [...].

Norton (2000) challenges the psycholinguistic approach to motivation in that this approach often categorises learners as either motivated or unmotivated. Alternatively, she asks the question why sometimes motivated learners would make little effort in the second language learning process. To answer this question, Norton Peirce (1995; Norton, 2000) departs entirely from the psychological tradition of SLA motivation and takes a poststructuralist approach to examining the relationship between agency, identity, social context and motivation. Although she draws on a number of concepts from social theories, including Anderson's (1993) *imagined community*; Bourdieu's (1977) *capital*, it is Weedon's (1987) *subjectivity* that underpins her perspective on identity, which is conceptualised as fluid, multifaceted and liable to change and negotiable by means of exercising our agency.

Norton's seminal research (2000) on immigrants' English learning experience in Canada Norton proposes that it is power relationship that prevents learners from translating their motivation into actions in certain social contexts. According to Norton, English learners' initiative to communicate using the target language is a form of investment in linguistic capital (cultural capital). Learners of English choose to invest based on the belief that their action will result in gaining more capital (i.e., resources or

possession). However, some learners' societal positions may prevent them from becoming *legitimate speakers* (the people who are thought of as worthy to communicate with in Bourdieu's theory) in front of the native speakers of the language.

Bourdieu (1986) proposed that there are four major types of capital in modern society, the first three types are economic capital (e.g. money and property rights), social capital (e.g., social network and connections) and cultural capital (e.g., education, qualification, and the ability to speak the prestigious variety of a language). Bourdieu (1991) held that these three forms of capital are invariably perceived symbolically, which means they are always associated with prestige or honour. He uses the fourth type of capital, symbolic capital, to represent the prestige and reputation behind the symbolic value of the other three forms of capital. However, since prestige and reputation can be generated from other aspects in life other than the economic, cultural and social capital (e.g., being a war hero), it is noted that symbolic capital is not only the culmination of different forms of capital. The possession of different forms of capital not only determines ones' social status, but also one's 'right to speak'. According to Bourdieu, individuals often expect their interlocutors to be someone 'worthy to listen' and 'worthy to speak' (1977, p.648), this *worthiness* is backed by the capital they possess (1991, p.504). Bourdieu calls those perceived as worthy to communicate with as 'legitimate speakers'. If one's capital is not sufficient to support its legitimacy, they will be regarded as '*not in a position to speaker (e.g. women)* or must win their audience'. In contrast, those who possess enough symbolic capital can 'effortlessly command attention' (Bourdieu, 1977, p.650).

In Norton Peirce's case studies in Canada (1995), the accounts of a number of adult immigrants epitomised the experience of legitimate speakers in the English learning context. A case in point is one of Norton's highly motivated informants, Eva, who became reluctant to speak in public sphere after a native speaker of English commented on her accent negatively (1995, p.19). This example indicates that learners do not necessarily benefit from their effort (or in Norton Peirce's term, *investment*), so they become cautious about investing (speaking English in Eva's case) in the language again.

In addition to Bourdieu's concepts of capital and legitimate speakers, Norton Peirce<sup>2</sup> also employs Weedon's (1987) theory on identity (which is called subjectivity in Weedon's publication) and human agency. The approach proposes that learners can deploy their agency to choose different identities to facilitate their own learning (Menard-Warwick, 2005). To Weedon, identities are relational (and therefore changeable), as an identity is often constructed in relation to what it is not, such as the dichotomised discourse of masculinity versus femininity in our society. Although some identities are framed as superior to the others (e.g. white versus non-white, local versus immigrants), human agency

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<sup>2</sup> Norton Peirce referred herself as Norton in her publications after 1995. This thesis follows this system, which refers she as Norton Peirce when her publications in and before 1995 are mentioned, and as Norton for the publications beyond 1995.

has the ability to position themselves in a more powerful status by reframing their social relationship, as identities are fluid and multifaceted (Weedon, 2004, p.19). Drawing on Weedon's theory, Peirce Norton conceptualises identity as "multiple": one often has more than one role (e.g., a woman can be a mother to her child, an employee to a company, and a citizen to a society at the same time); a site of struggle (being positioned or positioning oneself in a particular social status) and changing over time (Norton Peirce, 1995, p.15).

Norton Peirce's study in 1995 on immigrant learners of English in Canada is an example which demonstrates the exercise of agency. One of Norton Peirce's informants, Martina, perceived herself being in a lower position compared to her Canadian co-workers for she was an unskilled labourer and a non-native speaker of English. Repositioning herself as a mother of three children and the care-taker of her family rather than an immigrant, Martina succeeded in claiming 'her right to speak' (Norton Peirce, 1995, p.23). In particular, her maternal identity encouraged her to speak in public domains, such as talking to customers in the fast food restaurant she worked for, even though she had little symbolic power and 'legitimacy' (caused by her social position) to speak in public domains. On the other hand, Martina also made use of her maternal identity to reframe her power relationship with her Canadian colleagues which legitimized her initiatives to speak. As she is older than most of her colleagues, she identified herself as a mother-like character while engaging with her younger colleagues. As a result, the relationship between Martina and her colleagues was no longer characterised as a native speaker versus non-native speakers one, but a parent and children relationship. In this relationship, her younger Canadian colleagues are not someone she should obey, as she is no longer in an inferior position in the new relationship framework (Norton, 2000, p.127).

Another important concept in Norton's (2000) framework is imagined community. The concept has its root in Benedict Anderson's (1991) theory to explain the origin and spread of nationalism in the past few centuries. Anderson (1991, p.6) held that a nation is "'an imagined political community', since members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion".

Extending the notion to SLA, Norton (2000) suggests that imagination serves as a link between desire and action. Language learners often imagine themselves being a member of a community that only exist in their imagination, and the membership of this community in real life is what they desire. She proposes that if language learners' imagined communities are perceived by educators as unrealistic, the learners' may become less engaged in their learning. One of the case in Norton's (2000) study was Katarina, who was originally from Poland and immigrated to Canada in her adulthood. When she expressed her wish to take a computer course to her English teacher, she was discouraged as the teacher regarded Katarina's English as not good enough. This resulted in Katarina's withdrawal from the English course. Norton

(2001) explained that the seemingly dramatic reaction of Katarina was triggered from the denial of her potential membership of the professional community:

When Katarina and Felicia (another informant who had a similar experience) entered their language classrooms, they not only saw a classroom with four walls, but envisioned a community that transcended time and space. Thus, although these learners were engaged in classroom practices, the realm of their community extended to the imagined world outside the classroom – their imagined community. (p.164)

In other words, the classroom, or a broader learning environment, is an interface of the learners' imagination and reality through which their dream can become reality. However, when the teacher did not share with the learners their imagined identity, a possible result is that the learners take it as a denial of the accessibility, which could lead to their non-participation in the classroom.

### **2.3.2 L2 Motivational Self System: The self and identity in mainstream SLA motivation research**

In the mid-2000s, the self and identity also became a central concept in mainstream SLA motivation studies. Kostoulas and Mercer (2016) identify Norton's (2000) ethnographic study in Canada as the first milestone that marks the importance of the self and identity in SLA. The second milestone is Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System that brought the concepts to the mainstream motivation study.

The L2 Motivational Self System is a synthesis of the traditional SLA theories, Markus and Nurius's (1986) Self system and Higgins' Self Discrepancy Theory (1987) from mainstream psychology. According to Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) taxonomy, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational self system is categorised as a theoretical framework in the socio-dynamic period of SLA motivation. This model has been the most influential framework in SLA motivational research in the past 10 years (Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011, Boo et al, 2015).

The L2 Motivational Self System draws on two theories from psychology, namely possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). Possible Selves is an individual's future image of themselves: 1) What one wishes to become, or the attributes that one wishes to possess in the future; 2) what one is afraid of becoming; and 3) what one might become (Markus and Nurius, 1986, p.954). These three aspects of the self are crucial for motivation. It is because they provide individuals with hope, goals, meanings and incentives, so that individuals would take action in order to achieve the kind of person they want to be, or work hard to avoid the kind of person they are afraid of becoming. These selves shape our expectations, based on what one desires (positive possible selves) and fears (negative possible selves). These feelings and expectations determine where we place our attention, and the way we interpret what is salient and what is not. These experiences are all stored in our memories and become part of our image of ourselves, or self-concepts. These self-concepts then become a regulator of their actions or behaviour (Markus and Nurius, 1986).



Higgins' Self-Discrepancy theory (1987) is closely related to possible selves. He refers to the positive aspect of possible selves as the Ideal self; the qualities that an individual feels they are obliged to have as the Ought self; the qualities that an individual believes they have in the present as actual self. The theory posits that if different aspects of the self are contradictory to each other, an individual can experience emotional discomforts. These contradictory selves can be caused by, for examples, the conflicts between what one thinks they are obliged to become (ought self) and what one desires to become (ideal self); one's current status (actual self) and one's future desire (ideal self). Higgins proposes that human beings are motivated to reduce the discrepancy among these selves. Therefore, these conflicts also act as 'self-guides' which translate motivation into action. Incorporating these two theories into the existing L2 motivation models, Dörnyei (2005, 2009) posits that language learners are motivated by the desire of discrepancy reduction, and Ought to self and Ideal self are the two most important self-guides in his framework. Employing Possible Selves and Self-Discrepancy Theory, Dörnyei proposes that Ideal L2-Self is the best explanatory variable for learners' intended effort in target L2 (2005, 2009). The mechanism is that the discrepancy between one's current situation (one's L2 fluency has not been achieved) and one's Ideal L2 self (one's desire to become fluent in their L2) acts as a self-guide which motivates the learners to make more effort to reduce the discrepancy.

The core components of Dörnyei's model, L2 Motivational Self System, are comprised of the Ideal L2 Self, the Ought-to L2 Self and L2 Learning Experience. The Ideal L2 Self is represented by one's idea of 'what they would like to be' and Ought-to L2 Self is what they perceive themselves obliged to become. L2 Learning Experience is added to the model in order to capture the special context in L2 learning because sometimes language learning motivation can be affected by learners' learning environment (e.g., classroom).

Despite introducing new construct into the field of L2 motivation, Dörnyei emphasises that his model is no departure from the psycholinguistic tradition of L2 motivational research (2009, p.30). At a closer look, several constructs of other influential L2 motivational models are reconceptualised and incorporated into the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009). For instance, the Ought-to L2 Self is conceptually quite similar to extrinsic motivation (introjected regulation) in Self-Determination theory. In fact, the use of the Ideal L2 self was originally intended to replace the role of integrativeness in Gardner's socio-educational model. The needs for such replacement is due to the lack of explanatory power in integrativeness in social contexts outside Canada and similar societies. Specifically, integrativeness did show its predictive power in Dörnyei and his associates' (2006) large scale study in Hungary, as it was the only variable that had direct impact on the criterion measures (learners' choice of target language and intended effort) among the other six variables.

Based on these findings, Dörnyei argues that Gardner brought to light a pivotal contributing factor in L2 learning. However, the conceptualisation of the factor as 'integrativeness' is problematic in that

Gardner's interpretation of the concept could be only relevant to the context of certain multicultural societies. In the context of learning English as a second/foreign language, learners are not likely to identify themselves with a single speaking community, because English is a global language spoken by people of all nationalities. Additionally, some learners may not have the opportunity to integrate with the members of the community where their target language is spoken, which could make the concept of "integrativeness" irrelevant to them. Therefore, Dörnyei et al. hold that the interpretation of 'integrativeness' should be broadened and reconceptualised as the "Ideal L2 self" (Dörnyei et al., 2006, p.91): one's aspiration to master a language (Dörnyei, 2009, p.27; 2010, p.102). Explaining the enigma that integrativeness showed predictive power but lack explanatory power in the Hungarian study, Dörnyei (2010, p.102) argues that:

Looking from the self-perspective, the concept can be conceived of as the L2-specific facet of one's ideal self: If one's ideal self is associated with the mastery of an L2, that is, if the person that we would like to become is proficient in the L2, we can be described as having an integrative disposition.

Another important finding in Dörnyei and colleagues' study is that 'integrativeness' is best supported by the variable of 'instrumentality' in the research, followed by 'attitude toward L2 speakers/community' (2006, p.89-90). In view of the close associations among the three constructs, Dörnyei and colleagues propose that integrativeness (which is reconceptualised as the Ideal L2 self) is in fact attributable to instrumentality and attitude toward L2 speakers/community (2006). Dörnyei and colleagues explain that the close relationship between the Ideal L2 self, attitude toward L2 community (which can be understood as an international community in the context of English learning) and instrumentality reflects that language learners' Ideal L2 selves are linked to a global identity and professional success.

Although the Ought to L2 self is also a strong predictor variable for self-regulation in L2 Motivational Self System, empirical evidence shows that its effect on second language motivation is not as strong as the Ideal L2 self is. For instances, both Taguchi and colleagues' (2009) large scale studies in China, Iran and Japan (N = 1,000), and You and Dörnyei's (2016) large scale study (N > 10, 000) in China demonstrate that the Ideal L2 self is one of the strongest explanatory variables for learners' intended effort. These studies also support the assumption that L2MSS is generalisable to students from different cultural backgrounds, since similar results were found in countries with very different cultural settings (e.g., China, Iran and Japan in Taguchi and colleagues' study and Hungary in Dörnyei's study).

### **2.3.3 The Poststructuralist approach to identity and L2 Motivational Self System: Some common ground**

Norton (1995, 2000) and Dörnyei's (2005, 2009) frameworks are different from each other in many ways. For instance, Norton's model has its origin from poststructuralism, which focuses on power relationship and social inequality, whereas Dörnyei's system grew out of the theories of Possible Selves and Self-Discrepancy theory, and the focus of which is cognitive process. Although learners' perception

(or understanding) of themselves (self-identity) is the central concept of both theories, the two theorists' foci on this central concept are very different. Using the term "identity", Norton focuses on the social positions that one occupies. In her framework, these social positions are relational, and therefore subject to change in a different time and context. On the other hand, Dörnyei goes by the terminology of "self", which appears to be relatively stable in his framework (Henry, 2015). However, it is noted that Dörnyei himself emphasise the dynamic and temporal nature of the Ideal L2 self (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005; 2009; Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011), although he did not explain extensively how the Ideal L2 self can be understood as a dynamic concept in his framework (L2MSS), whose aim is to establish a causal relationship between variables using linear statistics (Structural Equation Modelling), which does not show much difference from the traditional approaches enumerated in the past few sections.

#### *2.3.3.1 The importance of imagination*

Nonetheless, some common ground can be found between these two seemingly very different approaches to the relationship between self-identity and motivation. One of the areas of agreement between the two models is that they both emphasise the importance of imagination in both frameworks. For example, Dörnyei (2005) holds that learners' ability to generate vivid imagination of themselves using their target language in the future could provide strong impetus for their learning (e.g., Dörnyei, 2009; Dörnyei and Chan, 2013); Norton also stresses that it is learners' imagined communities (a desirable community that a learner wants to be part of yet only exists at an imagined level while they are perfecting their language skills) that fuel their learning (2000, 2001). This is why Dörnyei observes that Norton's concept of "imagined communities" is an "inroad" into understanding the relationship between the Ideal L2 self and motivated action (2005, p.107).

Although Norton's framework came into existence before Dörnyei's L2MSS, Pavlenko and Norton (2007) did make reference to the relevance of possible selves (the theory that L2MSS grew out of) and imagined communities. In particular, they point out that both possible selves and imagined communities highlight the crucial role of the imagined (possible) self-identity, as they "shape individuals' present and future decisions and behaviours and provide an evaluative and interpretive context for such decisions, behaviours and their outcomes" (Pavlenko and Norton, 2007, p.590).

#### *2.3.3.2 Conditions for the translation from imagination into motivation*

The second similarity between the two frameworks is that both theorists agree that the existence of an Ideal L2 self or imagined community do not necessarily lead to motivated behaviour. Specifically, they both hold that some conditions need to be met for one to turn imagination into action.

Norton proposes that "imagination does not necessarily result in the coordination of action. It is where the notion of alignment becomes important, because "it is through alignment that learners do what they have to do to take part in a larger community" (2001, p.164). Alignment is a concept borrowed from

Wenger's communities of practice (1998), which denotes one's effort to follow the rules of the community, "do what they have to do to take part in a community". However, Wenger (1998) points out that one's effort to get into the community is at the same time interpreted by the members of the community. In other words, alignment is a two-way system. While learners work hard to "align" themselves with the members of their imagined communities (which is not an imagined one for the members), their effort may not be perceived positively (see Katarina's case mentioned in 2.3.1). Since gaining the membership of an imagined community involves the power to negotiate with others and gain the recognition of others, Norton Peirce defines identity as a "site of struggle" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p.15).

Dörnyei (2009) lists six conditions that facilitate the transformation of possible selves (the Ideal L2 self here is understood as a form of L2 oriented possible selves) into behaviour, such as congruence between the Ideal and current selves. Higgins (1987) and Oysmerman and colleagues (2006) hold that if the current self and the possible selves are vastly different, or conflicting with each other, the possible selves would not provide impetus for one to regulate their behaviour. Moreover, one's perceived plausibility is also an important condition that provides energy for one to pursue their goal, one would simply not take regulated action to develop their skills if they perceived the skills in question are not possible to acquire. Another condition required is whether an individual is aware of their possible selves. When discussing the concept of possible selves, Markus and Nurius (1986) also mentioned the construct of *working self-concepts*, which is defined as: "continually active, shifting array of available self-knowledge. The array changes as individuals experience variation in internal states and social circumstances" (1986, p.956). They argue that there are a set of self-identities in one's mental inventory, yet it is not possible for all of them to be active at the same time. Working self-concepts are the part of the self-knowledge just activated in one's mind (i.e., when you are aware of a particular set of possible selves), they can be positive and negative. If the positive working self-concepts are primed, they can provide incentives for one to pursue their goal (Markus and Nurius, 1986).

Despite the similarities between Norton (2000) and Dörnyei's (2009) framework, their conceptualisation of the self and Identity is quite different. For example, Norton defines identity as a fluid concept, socially situated and changing over time and space. Although Dörnyei also sees *self* as a multifaceted concept, as indicated by the distinction he made about the Ideal L2 self and Ought to L2 self, the stability of these two self-concepts is not clearly articulated in his work. Although Dörnyei does not explicitly express his view regarding the stability and fluidity of self, it is often portrayed as a stable construct unchanged over time, as Henry observes that 'ideal L2 selves risk, however, being conceptualised as static constructs, fixed "targets" that the individual strives to achieve or live up to' (2015, p.83).

In fact, Norton and Dörnyei's conceptualisation of self and identity have their roots from two very different disciplines, which hold very different world views, or epistemological positions regarding their

understanding of the self and identity. While Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) encourage researchers to unite these competing views on self and identity in motivation research, some challenges must be surmounted before the two very different perspectives on self and identity can be reconciled. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) suggest that poststructuralist and social psychological views on self and identity can coalesce through the application of complexity theory. These challenges and the effort made in the field to conciliate the differences will be discussed in the next two subsections.

## 2.4 Challenges of the self and identity facing motivation researchers in SLA and the solutions being put forward

Although Dörnyei and Ushioda (2009) call for an integrated approach to bring together self and identity theories in motivation research, some challenges must be overcome. Besides the nature of the self and identity, such as whether or not they are fluid or stable, another issue is whether the self and identity are the same concept. Researchers in different disciplines often use these two terms interchangeably, or use the two terms alongside each other when they express the idea of *how an individual understands themselves*. Williams and Mercer (2014) observe that the ambiguity of terminologies (terminological issue) and multiple conceptualisations of the self and identity (conceptual issue) are the two major contentious issues amidst vibrant discussions of the self and identity, for inter-disciplinary, or sometimes intra-disciplinary discussion can be impeded if the core concepts being discussed are ambiguous in their meaning.

### 2.4.1 Terminological challenge

Terminological challenge is characterised by the interchangeable use of terminologies, for sometimes researchers would use the same term to denote different concepts, yet sometimes use different terms to represent the same concept, and these phenomena even occur within the same text occasionally. This is why Kostoulas and Mercer (2016) criticise that there are multiple self-related terms in the applied linguistics literature, yet: “some of which overlap, some of which are distinct, and some of which lack a clear definition” (2016, p.128). The issue with terminology is not only a controversial issue in applied linguistics, but also in Psychology and the broader context of Social Sciences. Oyserman and colleagues (2012, et al.) note that identity, self and self-concepts are often used interchangeably. Reviewing the literature in social psychology and behavioural science, Leary and Tangney (2012) found that the term ‘self’ often carries very different meanings in different studies, the same phenomenon also happens with the other self-related terms. They identified five distinctive usages of self-related-terms, including: self as a total person; as personality, as experiencing subject, as beliefs about oneself and as executive agent (2012, p.4-5). In SLA, MacIntyre and colleagues (2009) also point out the same issue. On the one hand, they acknowledge the contribution of L2MSS, but on the other hand, they are also concerned about the use of the term “self”, as the definition of the term often lacks clarity. Interestingly, Block (2009) also

raises the same issue for researchers who take a sociocultural perspective, since the term “identity” and “subject position” are often used interchangeably (2009, p.217).

When the use of “self” and “identity” is so diffuse, it is at times difficult for researchers to understand if the same term carries the same meaning in a different study. Conversely, it is also unclear if the two terms are synonymous with each other when they appear in the same text. Therefore, Mercer and Williams (2014) express their concerns that the ambiguous terminologies can make the comparison among different studies a difficult task. In fairness, it is noted that the usage of self-identity is not entirely unsystematic. Oyserman and colleagues (2012, p.74) observe that literatures on social psychology and sociology make distinction between “social identities” (e.g., one’s feeling about group membership) and “personal identities” (e.g., one’s traits or characteristics, not necessarily connected to one’s roles in society, although it is often referred to as “self-concepts in Social psychology). Similarly, Riley (2010) also suggests that “personal identity” (not used in the same way as Oyserman does) is the synthesis of two concepts: *Self* and *Person*, where *Self* is “the source of individual agency” (2010, p.379), whereas *Person*, is similar to what Oyserman and colleagues (2012) describe as social identity. In other words, researchers do have a tendency to conceptualise self and identity in a clear way, at least in some areas and to a certain extent. Nonetheless, since the self and identity are central in many disciplines, a more coherent terminological system is required across and within disciplines (Morf and Mischel, 2012).

#### **2.4.2 Conceptual challenge**

Closely related to the terminological challenge is the conceptual challenge of self-identity. Mercer (2016) points out that different conceptualisation of self and identity reflects a particular different theoretical affiliation. For some theorists, self and identity are mental representations of oneself isolated from social structure. For others, self and identity are dynamic, contextualised and socially constructed. Markus and Nurius (1986) argue that the research on self and identity inevitably face the problem of whether they are stable or malleable. Mercer (2015) observes that when personality is seen as part of one’s self and identity, it suggests that there is a stable selfhood. However, we also have the feeling that self and identity would change and are socially situated, for we are constantly interacting with social context, different experience could trigger a different images (self-identity) of ourselves. In fact, these seemingly competing views on self-identity have co-existed for a long time. Although there is an increasingly robust and vibrant discussion on the relationship between self and identity, motivation and second/foreign language learning, in-depth conceptual papers dedicated to the nature (e.g. stable vs malleable) and development of self-identity in SLA are few and far between (Mercer, 2011).

The social psychological oriented research on motivation in SLA tends to see concepts related to self and identity as a mental process and cognitive representation of oneself. There has been no shortage of *self-identity-related-concepts* used as important constructs in many SLA theories, such as self-confidence (Clement, 1980), self-determination theory (Noel et al, 2003) and willingness to

communicate (Macintyre and Charos 1996). However, these theories only focus on one aspect of *self* but do not see *self* as the representation of a whole person. Norton Peirce (1995) argued that SLA researchers' *incomprehensive theorising* of social identity resulted in their struggle in addressing the relationship between social factors, self, identity and language learning. Although Dörnyei's L2MSS is an attempt to see self and identity from a more holistic perspective, it is recently criticised as not able to capture the fluid and dynamic nature of the concepts (Henry, 2015).

The issue of giving too much emphasis to some aspects of self and identity and not sufficiently addressing the others does not only happen in the literatures taking a cognitive approach, but also in those taking a socio-cultural approach, especially those adopt poststructuralist theories. Reviewing some important studies that centred on self-identity, Block (2009) holds that the relationship between agency and social structure has not been sufficiently attended to in the poststructuralist-oriented research. On the one hand, these studies often emphasise the importance of social factors, yet on the other hand, the informants in these studies were often portrayed as being able to actively author their own identity without explicitly mentioning the effect of social constraints in the process of self and identity-shaping. As a result, social structure is often moved to "a secondary plane" (2009, p.223).

The emphasis of human being's ability to actively shape their identity also leads to another conceptual dilemma. Bendle (2002) notes that the assumption that self and identity is central to human behaviour and the theorising of identity as fluid and multidimensional, as proposed by poststructuralists, are inherently contradictory. He quoted Brubaker and Cooper (2000) as saying: "if identity is everywhere, it is nowhere" (2000, p.1). Following this line of argument, Block criticises the belief that one is capable of taking on a different identity out of their volition as a "superficial approach" to self and identity (2009, p.224, 225). It is noted that Block does not fundamentally oppose the use of poststructuralist approach. In fact, he shows appreciation of the contribution that sociocultural theories have brought to the field, yet he holds that the effect of cognitive process should be taken into consideration if researchers are to give a fuller account for the relationship between self-identity and language learning.

Based on the review above, it is apparent that different theorists have captured some salient features of self and identity. Recently, theorists have reached a general agreement that some seemingly competing views on self and identity can co-exist when they are seen as different components of self and identity that serve different functions (e.g., Morf and Mischel, 2012 and Oyserman et al., 2012). For example, self and identity can be both fluid (as the sociocultural theorists suggest) and relatively stable (as manifested in the studies that focus on personality); it is both agentic (as upheld by some poststructuralists such as Weedon, 1987) and limited by social context (as Block proposed in his work in 2009). However, the challenge is, when self and identity are central to many disciplines and the number of self-identity-related-studies continues to burgeon, researchers must integrate these diffuse yet connected concepts. In the past ten years, researchers from different disciplines have proposed some

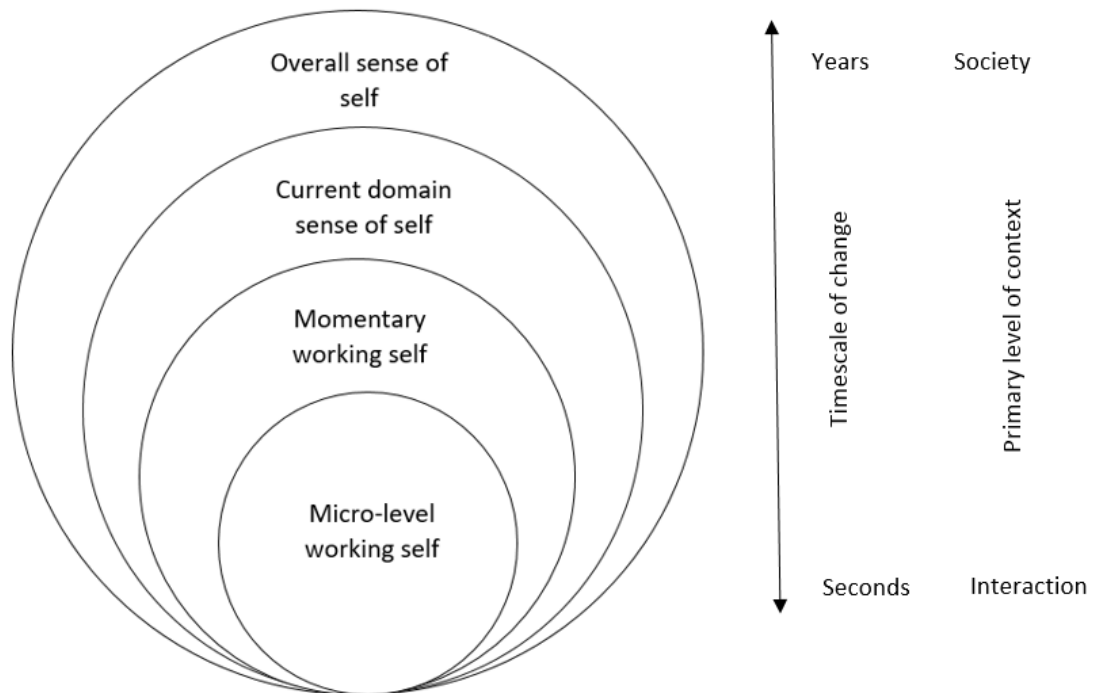
more integrated theorisation of self and identity, such as Mercer (2015, 2016) in applied linguistics, Davis and Sumara (2006) in education and Morf and Mischel (2012) and Oyserman et al. (2012) in social psychology. While these frameworks are unique in their own right, they all share the views that self and identity is a complex system that is multifaceted, changing over time, and interactive with social context.

#### **2.4.3 Integrating different components of self: Conceptualising self as a dynamic system**

In applied linguistics, Mercer conceptualises self as a multi-layered system at the intrapersonal level, but at the same time interactive with context at the societal level (2016). Drawing on Davis and Sumara's (2006) framework, Mercer (2015) proposes a model that aims to explain the link between contexts and the change of self focusing on an *intrapersonal* level. She proposes that self is a system constituted of different elements, some elements in the self system are more context-sensitive than the others, the more stable elements tend to form the core part of one's sense of self. For example, one's beliefs about their capacity for dealing with a speaking task in using their L2, or self-efficacy, is proposed to be more likely to change over time and more sensitive to interpersonal interaction. On the other hand, one's self-esteem, typically defined as one's beliefs about their own value, is understood to be more enduring. In other words, self-esteem does not vary drastically over time and space unless there is a magnitude change in context. For this reason, self-esteem would be more likely to contribute to ones' overall sense of oneself than self-efficacy does. Therefore, self-efficacy would be situated in the micro-level of the self system, whereas self-esteem would be in the macro-level of the self-system proposed by Mercer, as shown in the following schema:



Figure 2 Nested systems of self-identity proposed by Davis and Sumara (2006) and adapted by Mercer (2015, p.141)



The schematic diagram above is adopted from Davis and Sumara’s conceptualisation of self. In particular, the levels of self can be distinguished in terms of their “pace of evolution” (2006, p.29): how likely they are influenced by the change of immediate context. The smaller circles denote self related concepts that are relatively ephemeral (e.g., self-efficacy), and the larger circles represent concepts that are relatively stable (e.g., self-esteem).

However, the elements in Mercer’s conceptualisation of the self are not self-contained, but constantly interacting with contexts. She explains that how an individual sees the world and interacts with context, on the face of it, is his/her own decision to make, but the subject who makes the decision and interacts is shaped by the history and social context he/she was exposed in the past. Therefore, our thoughts and deeds are often strongly influenced by the social context. Although Mercer acknowledges that social context is influential in shaping one’s self, and it sometimes happens at the subconscious level, she disagrees with the view that self is entirely socially constructed, or the feeling of a “core self” is merely a product of power/social context (Foucault, 1994). She argues that it takes conscious effort for one to evaluate and assign meaning to social contexts, which is proof that there is a core self, (2016, p.23):

[...] the learners’ interpretation of their past and present contexts as well as their anticipated future contexts is also embedded in all the relationships that the learners form and the significance they assign to them in their self network [...]. Although we may unconsciously form relationships to things in our self network, our capacity for deliberate reflection and personal interpretation means that we are also likely to be able to consciously assign meaning

to contexts and experiences, which implies the potential for conscious change in the character and nature of the relationships we form.

Mercer's view echoes Morf and Mischel's conceptualisation that self is both "agentic and routinized" (2012, p.27). In fact, the discussion on whether "structure" or "agency" is more important, or more radically, whether agency is possible in a real sense, has always been a bone of contention in social sciences. For example, Foucault (1986) asserted in his *Disciplinary Power and Subjection* (1986) that: "The individual is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects [...]The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle" (1986, p.234). Foucault (1986) sees that individuals are products of power, and the existence of the individuals in a society perpetuate the power relationship that has shaped the individuals. This statement is synonymous with announcing that agency does not exist in a real sense. However, some poststructuralist feminists such as Mouffe (1996) and Weedon (1987, 2004) uphold that there is a human agency transcend the limitation of social context (see section 2.2.1).

Interestingly, Norton, who is one of the trailblazers in Applied Linguistics who proposes the fluidity and instability of identity, has recently proposes a framework with Darwin which acknowledges the stability of identity (Darvin and Norton, 2015). Their model aims to explain how systematic control in a society shapes our practices, our habitual behaviours and the way we see the world. This new approach to identity is very different from what Norton Peirce (1995) proposes two decades ago (see 2.3.1) because the new model acknowledges that there is a certain degree of stability in one's identity. This acknowledgement of the stability of identity is important because this means some common ground has been found between psychological approach and sociocultural approaches: self and identity are both stable and malleable.

#### **2.4.4 Reconciliation of different views on agency**

Although the contention about the stability and malleability of self and identity is (at least partly) resolved, the two perspectives (i.e., the psychological and sociocultural perspectives) have not reached agreement regarding the role of agency. In particular, the relationships between self/identity and motivation has thus far tended to focus on antecedents that predict second language learners' intended effort (e.g., Taguchi, Magid and Papi, 2009) and learning outcome (e.g., Dörnyei and Chan, 2013, cf. Boo, Dörnyei and Ryan, 2015). This line of research, usually foregrounded in quantitative and correlational-based analysis, has often been criticised for assuming self/identity as a static concept, paying little attention to learners' actual learning context (e.g., Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2009 and Henry, 2011) and overlooking power relationships (Norton Peirce, 1995). Dissatisfied with this approach, some researchers employ social theories to examine the connection between identity, power relationship and learners' agency, where the multidimensionality and malleability of self/identity are emphasised. These studies generally centre on how power relationships constrain learners and the power of human agency to transcend social constraints (Norton and McKinney, 2011). Block (2007) observes that researchers

sometimes romanticise the role of agency and downplay the influence of social structure and psychological factors. I propose that, Swann and Bosson's (2008) notion of identity negotiation can potentially reconcile different approaches.

#### **2.4.5 Identity negotiation and capital: weaving agency, mental process and social contexts together**

Although theorists generally agree that self and identity are both stable and malleable, how changes in self and identity happen remains a contentious issue. As mentioned in the previous sections, poststructuralists often see that human agency can negotiate or position their identity quite freely, whereas psycholinguists seldom discuss this issue. Swann and Bosson (2008) tend to see self and identity as stable concepts, but they argue that people would take self-initiated action to build up new selves and identities if the current one is perceived to be the cause of an unsatisfying life. Having pointed out the importance of agency, Swann and Bosson also emphasise the survival of these new selves or identities largely depends on whether they have a supportive social context. In other words, a self-identity is a product of negotiation, a negotiating process between one's agency and social context. For example, a woman may perceive herself as not attractive enough, so she begins to present herself as a more attractive person (e.g. by buying new clothes or wearing make-up) before the person she loves. However, for the long-term survival of this "attractive woman" self-identity, she also needs a supportive context. If she successfully wins over the affection of that person, the self-identity as an attractive woman will be internalised. Swann and Buhrmester (2012) also argue that people often take two strategies in maintaining an existing self-identity or establishing a new-self-identity: 1) people tend to endorse feedback congruent to their self-identity; 2) people tend to engage in a social environment in favour of the existing self-identity. One's new self-identity may not be able to survive if their environment does not gain the support of context.

Therefore, Swann and Bosson (2008) hold that for the survival or maintenance of a new self-identity, individuals not only need to take initiatives to change themselves, but also change their social environment: "For the effects of self-initiated identity change to be permanent, people must change not only their own self-views and narratives but also the social environments that typically support those self-views and narratives" (Swann and Bosson, 2010, p.617).

In other words, people are not passively shaped by contexts. Rather than the product of contexts, people also initiate agentic effort to negotiate their own self-identity. However, the consolidation of a new self-identity is often constrained by social environment and to what extent one can change it. Swann and Bosson's (2008) theory of Identity negotiation indicates that a change in self and identity is an interplay between cognition, social context and human agency. In essence, Swann and Bosson (2008) hold that human beings have the ability to exercise their agency to change their self and identity (e.g., developing or achieving an Ideal L2 self, believing that learning the mastery of a second language will lead to a

better-self), yet the conditions for an Ideal L2 self to grow are the harmony between different aspects of self and identity, seeing it as plausible and being in an environment where their Ideal L2 selves can be often activated (Dörnyei, 2009). To achieve these, an individual is required to have the capacity to negotiate with their social environment, or to change it (e.g., going to a country where the target language is spoken).

Lamb's case study (2009) in Indonesia is an example that showcases the effect of such capacity on the development of the Ideal L2 self. In particular, the interviewee from a middle-class family had more capacity for controlling her environment (e.g., talked to an English-speaking friend at school), whereas another interviewee from the rural area of Indonesia could hardly change his social context. These differences contributed to the development of the middle-class-interviewee's Ideal L2 self in the interview, and underdevelopment of the other interviewees. Lamb maintains that while it is important to point out the importance of self-identity and imagination in motivation, researchers should not lose sight of the fact that the resources that one can capitalise to facilitate the Ideal L2 self and imagination are often not equally distributed. It is the reason why the current study employs the notion of *capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) to denote the effect of resources possessed by learners on the development of their Ideal L2 self and motivation.

## 2.5 The theoretical approach of this study

Despite differences are found among motivation theories and self-identity, based on the literature review in section 2.4.3 and 2.4.4, some common ground regarding the characteristics of self and identity is found. They are:

- 1) Self and identity are influential to motivation
- 2) Self and identity form a system that consists of different components, which can also be seen as an interplay among agency, social context and human cognition.
- 3) Imagination is a crucial link between goals and actions (see 2.3.3)
- 4) There is a need for psychological and sociocultural theories to complement each other in order for self-identity to gain more explanatory power regarding its relationship with motivation.
- 5) Self and identity are both fluid and stable. **While some aspects of self and identity**

Based on these agreements, this study will focus on the role of the Ideal L2 self (based on agreement 1 and 3) in the quantitative part of this study, and it will also employ two theoretical models and Bourdieu's concept of *capital* (1986) to analyse the qualitative data in this project. While the theoretical basis of the quantitative research is largely situated within Dörnyei's L2MSS, which has been reviewed in section 2.3.2, the theoretical approach to the qualitative research needs some more explanation.

Before proceeding to the next section, I would like to make a terminological caveat with regard to the definitions of self and identity. Although, as we can see in 2.4.3, some applied linguists have risen to the conceptual challenge (see 2.4.2), the terminological challenge (see 2.4.1) remains. Oyserman et al. (2012, p.74) observe that literatures on social psychology and sociology often use two terminologies while discussing different aspects of “self”, namely “social identities” (e.g., one’s feeling about group membership, such as “I am a PhD student”) and “personal identities” (e.g., one’s traits or characteristics, not necessarily connected to one’s roles in society, such as “I am quite good at language). Having said that, these two terms are not commonly used in Applied Linguistics, using the terms of social identity and personal identity alongside with other self-related terms (e.g., the ideal L2 self, possible selves) may add confusion to the already inconsistent use of terminologies. Additionally, the concept of social identity and personal identity are not entirely independent of each other. There are occasions where personal and social identity are intertwined with each other. A person may perceive himself as fat and feels himself being not popular among his colleagues. It is not easy to tease out whether “I am fat” is a social identity or a personal identity because “being fat” in this context has both social and psychological implications. As such, deciding whether “being fat” is a social or personal identity may result in being too engrossed in the nuances of conceptualizing the details and lose sight of the bigger picture. In fact, the concept of the ideal L2 self in Dörnyei’s L2MSS is often used in different ways in the SLA literature. While one of its origins, Self-discrepancy theory, conceptualises the ideal L2 self as the desirable quality one wants to possess (i.e., intrapersonal), some SLA studies see it as a social identity that a language learner is trying to achieve. One of such studies is Lamb’s (2009) research on the English learning motivation of two teenagers (the ideal L2 self of one of his participants is conceptualised as her ambition to become an international business woman). Unfortunately, further discussion on these theoretical and operational ambiguity may become a distraction from the purpose of this study. Therefore, this thesis favours clarity over accuracy. Therefore, for the sake of clarity, this thesis deals with self and identity in the following way: I will use a more generic term: self-identity, to 1) denote concepts that can be seen as either social identity or personal identity and 2) represents both self and identity. I will also use “identity” to denote concepts that are clearly referring to an individual’s interpersonal relationship/social position, and “self” will be used to represent concepts related to one’s intrapersonal traits clearly independent of social position, such as personality. This way, clarity can be achieved without deviating too much from the literature.

### **2.5.1 An overview of the theoretical approach to this study**

Section 2.4 reviewed that the construction of one’s self-identity results from the complex interplay between our society (context), cognitive process and agentic effort, this study aims to bring together different theories to account for the trajectories of the (non-)development of three learners of Chinese’ Ideal L2 selves. Nonetheless, there is a lack of metatheory in SLA that encompasses these concepts of self-identity, as until recently they were either seen as competing with each other at best, or co-existing

in two “parallel world” with only very limited conversation between one another (Zuengler and Miller, 2006, p.35). Although Mercer (2011, 2015, 2016) has tried to unite different views on self-identity and form a coherent theory for SLA researchers, by her own admission, the model remains in a developing stage (2016). Therefore, two very different yet compatible theories were employed to examine the interview data in the current study, namely communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986). Beside the explanatory power that these two theories can bring to this study, another reason for adopting *communities of practice* and *possible selves* is that they are the origins of Norton (2000, 2001) and Dörnyei’s theoretical models, who both propose the strong relationship between imagination and motivation, and yet agree that there are conditions to be met in order to turn imagination into motivation, which have been discussed in section 2.3.

In particular, both Norton (2000, 2001) and Dörnyei (2005, 2009) propose that imagination can potentially provide incentives for second/foreign language learners to work hard in order to become the one they want to be in their imagined world. The qualitative research investigates how and why the three focal learners (un)successfully turned their Ideal L2 self into motivation (conceptualised as a L2 specific positive possible selves) analysing their learning history. I integrated Wenger’s Communities of practice (1998); Bourdieu’s concept of capital (1986); and Markus and Nurius’s *possible selves* (1986) to analyse their history. Communities of practice was drawn as a framework to describe the focal learners’ future identity (ideal L2 self) negotiation experience: how did the learners take agentic initiatives to negotiate their way into a member of their imagined community, and how they perceive this process. As one of the criticisms levelled on communities of practice is the absence of power relationship (e.g., Haneda, 2006; Roberts, 2006), this study also looks at in what way the learners’ effort and opportunities to interact with the imagined community were facilitated by the amount of power they possessed. *Possible selves* (1986), on the other hand, was employed to examine in what way the perceptions of the participants’ experience influence their judgement regarding their decision on the amount of effort they are willing to invest in the target language (i.e. Mandarin Chinese) from a psychological perspective.

### **2.5.2 Communities of practice**

Wenger (2010) defines his communities of practice as a “social learning system” (2010, p.179). A community in his framework is defined as a “social configuration” (1998, p.5) in which one’s participation is regarded as “competence”. This competence does not only mean skills or knowledge valued by the members of the community, but also includes the understanding of the norms and culture of the social configuration. It is noted that what Wenger is interested in is *communities of practice*, but *not* community in a traditional sense. The difference between the two concepts is, the latter can be easily understood as a community because of their distinct culture, structure and activity that are different from the others, whereas the former (communities of practice) involves practice: a constant negotiation of being a member of such community. In a community of practice, people negotiate their membership by

displaying their competence, or align their experience with what is defined as competence by the community' members.

The theory of communities of practice was developed by Lave and Wenger's theory of situated learning (1991) and extended by Wenger in his later work (1998). Central to the theory of situated learning is the concept of *Legitimate peripheral participation* (LPP), which proposes that novices acquire a skill by participating in the community of practice. In the beginning, the learners' participation in the community is limited, as they acquire more skills or competency, they move toward full participation in the community. The movement from peripheral to the centre is seen by Lave and Wenger as "an evolving form of membership" (1991, p.53). Learners develop an identity of mastery as they have acquired more competency. However, the development of a new identity is relational, it entails the recognition of the members of the community.

This is why when a newcomer wants to become part of this community (or community of practice), they are also required to make effort to demonstrate they have the competency defined by the members of the community (2000). As a result, the members' definition of competency shapes the newcomer's experience. When there is a gap between the newcomer's experience and what competency is defined, and the newcomer tries to negotiate their way into the communities, this is when learning takes place. The process of learning is closely related to our identity, as identity is in part defined by our community membership. While we are negotiating the meaning of competence and our community membership, we are constructing who we are at the same time. In Wenger's framework, the negotiation of identity and our community membership are ongoing processes. It is noted that Wenger emphasises that participation and negotiation of identity (constructing who we are) are ongoing processes. Therefore, not only are the novices required to negotiate their membership as they are moving toward the centre of the community of practice, but also the veteran members of the community. However, as the participants in this study were all novices in their community of practice (will explain in chapter 3 and chapter 5), I will focus on how novice participants negotiate their membership of the community of practice.

#### *2.5.2.1 The three modes of belonging in a community of practice.*

The previous subsection outlined the system of social learning in *communities of practice* and reviewed that learning is conceptualised as a process acquiring the membership and identity of a community by acquiring the knowledge and culture of the community. In this section, I will present the three ways that a learner participates in this system, namely engagement, imagination and alignment. These three ways of participation are altogether called *modes of belonging* by Wenger (1998), as through engagement, imagination and alignment we construct our identity as a member of (belonging to) the community of practice.

### *Engagement*

Engagement is a direct participation in activities and conversations in a community of practice. By actively participating in the community, a learner is negotiating the meaning of their experience. On the one hand, this experience has a personal element, but on the other hand, it is embedded in social context. Therefore, engagement is a practice that brings together individual and collective elements. Engagement is a source of identity, as it allows a learner to gain direct experience of what it means by competence in the community. Competence involves three aspects of knowledge or ability, which include the learners' 1) understanding what matters in the community; 2) opportunities and ability to communicate directly with the members of the same community and 3) opportunities to make use of the resources of in the community. However, one can also experience incompetency in the process of engagement. An individual who experiences incompetency may refuse to make more effort to build up his/her identity, which is when non-participation in the community happens (Wenger, 2010).

### *Imagination*

Imagination is defined by Wenger as the construction of "an image of ourselves, of our communities and of the world, in order to orient ourselves, to reflect on our situation, and to explore possibilities" (Wenger, 2000, p.227-228). The concept of imagination is derived from Benedict Anderson's (1983) theory of imagined communities which depicts a nation-state as an imagined community. The difference between *engagement* and *imagination* is that the former is confined to a particular time and space: there is a border for the happening of engagement, yet the latter transcends time and space. Although one may not have direct involvement in the communities, a learner can gain a sense of belonging through imagination and result in a different form of participation in the social world.

As mentioned in the previous section, the negotiation and construction of one's identity are ongoing processes, therefore, both novice and veteran members of the community are required to do so continuously during their time in the community, although in different forms and to different degrees. For example, the professional self-identity of an insurance company's claim processor in Wenger's book (1998) was strengthened through the imagination the work of other companies' claim processors while engaging with the staff of his/her own company.

Regarding members in the periphery of the community, Wenger (1998) gave an example of two stonecutters to explain the effect of imagination on participation. In his example, one stonecutter thought of himself as cutting a stone in a square shape, but another one thought of himself as building a cathedral. The two persons' level of engagement in a community of "building a cathedral" can be the same, but if one of the persons thought of himself or herself as a member of a particular community, the way he or she participates in the social world will be very different.

It is noted that Norton (2001) also drew on the concept of imagination to explain two learners' non-participation in the English class: a participant in Norton's study was denied as good enough to be a



member of her imagined community by the English teacher, who was the participant's significant others. Since then, the participant never went back to the English class again. (see 2.3.1). The case in Norton's study is closer in its nature to the stonecutter's example than to the insurance claim processor's case, as the claim-processor was already at the centre of the community who had full participation. Given the participants in the current study were all novice speakers of Mandarin Chinese, I will take Norton's approach to the term, which refers to the term as "a way to appropriate meanings and create new identities.....reflects the desire of learners to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds" (Pavlenko and Norton, 2007, p.590)

Interestingly, this approach to "imagined communities" shares a great deal of similarities with concept of the ideal L2 self (which has its origin from Markus and Nurius' possible selves and Higgins' Self discrepancy theory), especially the emphasis both theories place on the relationship between imagination and behaviour. However, their definitions are slightly different: "imagined community" is a social configuration (e.g., a professional group or a company) in Wenger (1998) and Pavlenko and Norton's (2007) definition, which appears to be more relational, and "Ideal L2 self" seems to signify something more personal, as it denotes one's hope and dream, as well as the perceived qualities one would like to have ideally (Higgins, 1987). Therefore, in the following few chapters, "imagined community" will be used to represent the profession that the participants of this study are trying to work in, ideal L2 self is a term for the type of person that the participants would like to become, such as being good at Mandarin Chinese.

### *Alignment*

Alignment is a concept closely related to engagement. Alignment entails an individual's effort to make sure our engagement is in line with the rules in the community. Alignment does not simply mean compliance and accepting external rules or submitting to authority unilaterally, but it is a two-way system which members can coordinate the other members' interpretation of their actions, persuasion is one of the aspects of coordination.

Wenger also draws attention to the concept of *multiple-membership*, which proposes that individuals often participate in more than one communities of practice. By extension, the individuals would also have more than one identities. In other words, individuals could engage, imagine and align their experience in more than one communities, although these three forms of belonging do not necessarily happen at the same time in every community. It is also noted that he opposes the idea that identities are fragmented or isolated, but emphasises that they are affecting each other. Given that different identities can be very different from one another, an individual must make effort to coordinate and reconcile them. The coordination and reconciliation of different identities require one to build up an overarching self-identity that encompasses different facets of self-identities.

#### 2.5.5.2 *Communities of practice in SLA*

Toohey (1998) was among the first researchers who employed communities of practice in the investigation of second language learning. She observed the English acquisition of four primary school pupils (whose L1 was not English) in a classroom setting. She found that the practice in the classroom as a community is characterised by the teacher's individualisation of the pupils, as the pupils were under surveillance and so that the amount of interaction between the English L1s and English L2s was minimal. As a result, with fewer opportunities to move from the peripheral to the centre by engaging with the English L1s, she proposed, the English L2s in the classroom might suffer from being seen as "deviants" in the long run, which would have been avoided if the classroom practice was done otherwise.

More recently, Umino and Benson (2016) examined an Indonesian student's four-year-Japanese-learning experience in Japan. It was found that opportunities for interacting with native speakers are not always guaranteed, and it only happened to the informant of their study, Iwan, in his fourth-year's sojourn in Japan. These opportunities were partly created by the intention of Iwan, but it also largely depended on how willing the members of the host country (Iwan's communities of practice) are to communicate with him.

In the Chinese learning context, Jing-Schmidt and colleagues' (2016) incorporated Turner et al.'s Self-Categorization Theory (1987) with Communities of Practice (1998) to investigate the experience of four heritage learners of Chinese who stayed in China for a one-year-long study overseas programme. Two of the learners found their participation in the Chinese community congruent with their goals, which resulted in facilitating the development of Chinese identity. However, the other two learners felt they were treated differently from other Euro-American students because they looked Chinese. As their American identity was denied, they found that there was a need for defending their American-ness, at least discursively.

All of the examples above show that participation in a community does not guarantee acceptance. Some people in the studies successfully negotiated their way into the community and gradually became a member (e.g. two of the informants in Jing-Schmidt and colleagues' article in 2016), but some others struggled to do so due to the rejection from the members of the communities (e.g., the other two learners in the same study). While communities of practice enables researchers to see learning as a process of identity negotiation in which learners acquire their new identity through agentic participation, it does not explain why some people are more likely to be accepted and some others are prone to rejection or lack the opportunity to participate in the community. As Haneda points out, while using the framework, researchers must ask: What kind of opportunities for participation are afforded to community members? What kinds of structures are in place to make participants' access to community resources possible" (2006, p.809)?

### **2.5.3 The importance of resources: Bourdieu's concept of capital**

Therefore, this study also employs Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *capital* to examine how different forms and amount of capital available to the three focal participants can affect the degree to which they participate in their communities of practice. In particular, I will evaluate what facilitated or impeded the learners' engagement, imagination and alignment analysing their narrative, in terms of the four forms of capital in Bourdieu's conceptualisation of *capital*, namely economic capital (e.g., money, assets), cultural capital (educational qualification, language), social capital (social network) and symbolic capital (prestige, sometimes supported by the other three forms of capital).

Nevertheless, what is construed as capital and the way one form of capital is converted into another are governed by the rules presupposed in a *field* (1977). In particular, a field is a site or a social setting where social agents play by its rules to accumulate different forms of capital. The value of capital possessed by a social agent is an important determinant of their social positions, and vice versa. This position also determines the degree to which they can change the rules of the field. While the agents with more capital in a field have a higher capacity to amass more capital, it does not mean those with less capital are not able to move upward in a society, because actors sometimes actively convert one form of capital to the others in order to accumulate more capital, the value of one form of capital may also change in different fields. An example that epitomises the relationship between capital and field can be found in Block's (2007) reinterpretation of Kinginger's (2004) study. The participant in the study, Alice, was born in a poor family in the United States. Alice had developed a fantasied image of France in her home country and longed for going to the country to improve her French. However, she realised everything in France was in great contrast to her imagined world upon her arrival. Disappointed with her learning experience in the formal setting, she decided to situate her learning in an informal context. She began to persistently frequent local pubs and invite French students in the residence hall to her place. Alice finally managed to bring her real-life experience closer to her idealised French way of living. By the end of her sojourn, Alice referred to herself as "the Queen of France" (2004, p.236) who could talk to her fellow students in French and even had "long philosophical conversations using big long French words". She described herself as "I was so French" (ibid).

Revisiting the Kinginger's study, Block (2007) suggests that some French speakers were attracted to Alice's symbolic capital of "American-ness" (p.873) which enabled Alice's to gradually immerse herself in a French speaking environment outside the classroom. This American-ness may not be valuable in one field (the United States) but it became something sought after in another field (France). Expanding from Block's reinterpretation of Alice's case, I propose another form of capital possessed by Alice is her native language. Specifically, Kinginger mentioned Alice got a job as an English teaching assistant at a local high school by the end of the second term of her studies, providing her with the financial means to continue her studies in France. While Alice's background (her social position) may not have endowed her with much capital in one field (i.e., the American society), her English and

“Americanness” became cultural and symbolic capital in another field (i.e., France). As a result, she could convert them into social capital (her French speaking friends) and economic capital by means of which more cultural capital (i.e., French) was accumulated. In other words, Alice succeeded in negotiating an identity of “the Queen of France” cannot be attributed only to her personal effort and persistence, but it is also attributable to the capital she possessed.

Although the use of the concept of capital, especially cultural capital, is ubiquitous in SLA studies, it has been often used synonymously with second/foreign learners’ target language or the linguistic skill to be acquired (e.g., Ibrahim, 1999; Norton Peirce, 1995 and Siegel, 2006). More recently, researchers have broadened the usage of the term and see it as resources that catalyse students’ learning outcome. For example, Lin (2012) focuses on cultural capital’s effect on learners’ disposition. The case study found that working-class students’ lack of enthusiasm for the task-based language teaching (TBLT) activities was caused by the fact that the students lacked the middle-class attitudes and cultural capital by which they could respond well to the teachers’ approach (i.e., task-based language teaching) and therefore benefited from the pedagogies.

Lamb’s (2009) qualitative study in Indonesia also examines the effect of capital on learning behaviour and motivation, but his analysis is situated in the framework of L2MSS. In particular, Lamb examines how capital influences L2 self, a strong factor that holds sway in second/foreign learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2009 and Norton, 2000). In his study, the middle-class teenage girl was strongly motivated, and her Ideal L2 self was very pronounced which also provides impetus for her to learn. In contrast, the teenage boy from the rural area of the country has a much weaker ideal L2 self, and his study is also characterised by the ought to L2 self. Lamb argues that the girl’s ideal L2 self is shaped, supported, internalised by her capital. Her family background provides her with the cultural capital (her parents studied at the United States). Her parents’ socioeconomic status also allows her to attend a prestigious school, where she gets to speak English with her friends at school. Lamb holds that the middle-class girl’s capital created a right self/identity (the ideal L2 self) for her to accumulate more cultural capital (i.e., English). Lamb’s approach to analysing the relationship between the capital, Ideal L2 self and motivation demonstrates how psychological and sociocultural perspectives can come together and better explains how and why some learners are motivated by a particular factor. While self/identity have become central concepts in motivation studies in SLA, how a favourable self/identity (the ideal L2 self in Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self system and agency to position oneself in a more powerful identity in Norton’s theory) comes into existence remains short in detail in many studies. Dörnyei’s L2 motivational self system, a framework that takes a psychological perspective, proposes that attitude toward the L2 community and learners’ perceived instrumentality (promotional) of the target language are the two antecedents of the ideal L2 self. Dörnyei also suggests a vivid imagination of the ideal L2 self can help L2 learners to generate a stronger Ideal L2 self. However, one would ask a follow-up question that why some people have a more positive attitude toward the L2 community, more likely to

perceive the instrumentality (promotional) of their target language and have stronger vivid imagination than the other? The examination of the existence of these factors, if not grounded in social context, can become an infinite regress argument. Regarding the sociocultural perspective in SLA, which predominantly draws on poststructuralist approaches, often emphasise identity formation and negotiation are related to discourse and positioning. Thus, the importance of social structure is often not sufficiently addressed. This is why Block (2007) proposes that researchers examining the relationship between identity and second/foreign language learning should give more weight to social structure and social context. While there are numerous theories and frameworks that define what social structure is, this study employs Bourdieu's theory in that it has been proven a powerful conceptual tool in SLA research (see above).

#### **2.5.4 Possible selves**

In section 2.3, I have focused on the link between possible selves and motivation while introducing Dörnyei's L2 motivational self system. In this section, I will discuss in more depth the conditions that make possible selves serve the function as incentives. Possible selves are one's mental representations of what they might become, what they would like to become and what they are afraid of becoming. The positive aspects of possible selves can be also understood as one's Ideal selves (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), which denote one's hope, wishes and attributes that they want to have ideally (Higgins, 1987). In Markus and Nurius's 1986 articles, they proposed that possible selves could instigate behaviour (e.g., learning) when an individual perceives that 1) their goals are possible, which is closely associated with one's perceived ability to control the process. 2) their goals (ideal selves) with their social identity (e.g., group acceptance) is also an important factor. Dörnyei understands the harmony between social identity and an ideal self as a harmonious relationship between the ideal self and ought-self (what you are expected to become or to possess the qualities). In other words, congruence between social and personal identities are equally important in transforming ideal selves into motivation. Moreover, Ruvolo and Markus (1992) found that 3) one would perform better when their successful possible selves are primed. However, Oyserman and colleagues (2006) found that such effect is only significant when personal and social identities are harmonious with ideal selves.

##### *2.5.4.1 Necessary activation and priming*

When discussing the concept of possible selves, Markus and Nurius (1986) also proposed the concept of "working self-concepts", which is defined as: "continually active, shifting array of available self-knowledge. The array changes as individuals experience variation in internal states and social circumstances" (1986, p.956). They argued that there are a set of self-identities in one's mental inventory, yet it is not possible for all of them to be active at the same time. Working self-concepts are the part of the self-knowledge just activated in one's mind (i.e., you are aware of a particular set of

possible selves), they can be positive and negative. If the positive working self-concepts are primed, they can provide incentives for one to pursue their goal (Markus and Nurius, 1986).

Previous studies show that students from across socio-economic groups express their aspiration (possible selves) to go to college, but the high socio-economic group are more likely to hold onto their aspiration (Hanson, 1994; Kao and Tienda, 1998; Schneider and Stevenson, 2000). Without using the term “working self-concepts”, Oyserman (2013) argues the one of the causes behind it is that low-income and minority students’ academic possible selves are less accessible, or less likely to be activated than their white, middle class counterpart due to their social environments.

Oyserman and her colleagues (2006) investigated if an intervention programme could enhance low-income-minority-students’ accessibility of academic possible selves. The intervention was a seven-week after-school programme which cued the low-income minority students with academic possible selves continuously, so that these possible selves could become more frequently activated both inside and outside schools (twice weekly over a period of seven weeks). Their experiments found that the students tended to invest more in their academic self-identities when these self-identities became easier to be activated. In applied linguistics, Michael Magid (Magid and Chan, 2011) also used a similar method to enhance English learners’ motivation, and the result was also positive.

#### *2.5.4.2 Harmony between ought to and ideal L2 selves*

Although Dörnyei (2009) highlights the importance of ought to/ideal L2 selves congruence, studies suggest that that other aspects of self-identities also need to be harmonious with each other, otherwise possible selves may be seen as irrelevant and therefore no motivated actions will be taken (Oyserman, et al., 2006). In addition, the gap between one’s ideal self and current self can serve as a self-guide (a motivator) as one would seek to narrow the difference between the two selves, Higgins (1987) pointed out that the greater the discrepancy between ideal self and actual self (the self-identity that one perceived themselves at present), the greater the intensity. If the discrepancy is seen as too large, one could suffer from emotional discomfort.

Furthermore, while social psychologists generally agree that self-identity is a multilayer concept in which each layer is fluid and context-dependent to a different degree (Morf and Mischel, 2012; Oyserman et al., 2012 and Ryan and Deci, 2012), they also emphasise that people tend to seek coherence among different self-identities or self-views (Oyserman et al., 2012; Swann, 1983, 1990). The reason behind the search of coherence lies in the fact that people need an organised experience as guidance for current social interaction and future events.

Oyserman and colleagues (2006) found that if African Americans see their self-identity as in conflict with the academic possible selves, they are less likely to put effort at school. Oyserman argued that if learners consider the possible selves (or ideal selves) are not congruent to their current self-identity,

when they experience difficulties, they would easily perceive the qualities of ideal self as “not for people like me” and therefore give up pursuing it (Oyserman, 2015, p.1).

#### 2.5.4.3 *Perceived plausibility (perceived control) and ability*

Even if an ideal L2 self is activated and harmonious with other aspects of self-identities, whether individuals would take necessary steps depend on how much they perceived it as achievable, or their perceived plausibility. Perceived plausibility, or perceived control, is defined by Rodin as “expectation of having the power to participate in making decisions in order to obtain desirable consequences and a sense of personal competence in a given situation (1990, p.4). In the context of possible selves, Norman and Aron (2003) conceptualised perceived control as one’s belief on their ability to achieve and avoid possible selves. They posited that the more individuals believe they can influence the attainment of the ideal self, the more likely they take initiatives to do so. However, Oyserman and James (2008) hold that when the attainment of possible selves is almost certain, or perceived to be achievable with reasonable amount of effort, the likelihood of self-regulated behaviour will be lower, because extra effort would be seen as unnecessary (see also Hoyle and Sherrill, 2006).

## 2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has reviewed the major milestones that marked the development of motivation theory in Second Language Acquisition. Section 2.2 gave an historical overview of the field’s theoretical development from the late 1950s to early 2000s. These fifty years were characterised by Gardner’s Socio-Educational Model (late 1950s to 1990); the criticism on Gardner’s model; and the reaction to the dissatisfaction of the model by integrating more mainstream psychological theories into SLA throughout the 1990s (cognitive-situated period). The section also reviewed that different methods and theories emerged at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in order to portray the developmental process of motivation (the process-oriented period). This period can be seen as a transition that paves the way for the rise of the socio-dynamic period (mid-2000s to present day). Although the “dynamic” nature of Dörnyei’s L2 Motivational Self System is not undisputable, the framework is certainly the most influential framework in the Socio-dynamic period. More importantly, the model put self-identity at the centre of many research projects since it has been introduced to SLA (Boo et al., 2015).

About a decade before the introduction of L2MSS, self-identity had also become a core concept for sociocultural-oriented research in SLA (Block, 2007), which also gradually gained attention in the mainstream in the early 2000s. One of the most influential models is Norton’s (2000, 2001) model that explained the relationship between power and motivation. Section 2.3 is a review on the two models (Norton and Dörnyei’s models) in which self-identity are central. Section 2.4 discussed two major challenges faced by research on self-identity and motivation, namely terminological and conceptual challenges (Williams and Mercer, 2014), and a recent integrative approach to self-identity proposed by Mercer (2015, 2016). In section 2.5, I focused on the theoretical frameworks that I draw on to analyse

the qualitative data of this project, namely communities of practice (Wenger, 1998) and possible selves (Markus and Nurius, 1986), and the notion of capital that attends to the potential weakness of the theory of communities of practice.



## Chapter 3: Research Design

### 3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, I have outlined the theoretical development of motivation research in the past few decades and reviewed how self-identity has become the central construct in the field. However, it was also noted that Mandarin Chinese as a second/foreign language in self-related-motivation studies and the development of the Ideal L2 self are two of the areas underrepresented in the literature. Therefore, this study set out to examine the role of the Ideal L2 self in the context of learning Mandarin Chinese as a second/foreign language. Nonetheless, the aim of this study is not only to test the association between the Ideal L2 self and learners of Chinese's intended effort, but also asked the question whether some learners had a stronger Ideal L2 self than the others. Moreover, this study is also an attempt to integrate the sociological constructs of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) and agency (Norton, 2000) into the analysis of the development of the Ideal L2 self. This approach was motivated by the recent paradigm shift in SLA that sees the development self-identity as the interplay between cognitive conditions and social contexts. With these three purposes on the agenda, two research instruments were designed. This chapter presents how these two instruments were designed, why they were designed, the procedure that they were administered, and how the data collected by these two instruments was analysed. In section 3.2, I will discuss the research objectives and research questions of the current study in more depth. Section 3.3 gives an overview of the research design of the study and explains in what way the design corresponds to the research questions. Section 3.4 describes the sample population of this study and the criteria concerning the selection of the participants. Section 3.5 reported on the design and the content of the two research instruments in this study: a questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Then, the procedure of data collection is reported on in section 3.6. Having detailed the research design, instruments and data collection procedure, I will put the focus on the analytical methods in section 3.7 and 3.8. Section 3.7 outlined the procedure of a statistical technique called cluster analysis, which is thus far scarcely used in motivation research. Section 3.8 reviews analytical technique for the analysis of the qualitative data, namely narrative inquiry.

### 3.2 The objectives of this study

The general objectives of the current study are threefold. As outlined in the introduction, it set out to examine the correlational relationship between different motivational factors and learners' intended effort in the context of learning Mandarin Chinese as a second/foreign language, with the focus going to the role of the Ideal L2 self. After examining the overall motivational orientations of the sample, the study investigated if different groups would be motivated by different motivator. Similarly, the inquiry of group difference also centred on the role of Ideal L2 self: if some groups were more motivated by the Ideal L2 self, if they were, what was its effect on intended effort. The third objective followed up the finding regarding group difference. Specifically, why did some learners successfully develop a robust

Ideal L2 self, but some people's ideal L2 self remained feeble. The quest of these three areas were formulated as the following research questions:

- 1) What were the motivation for the participants of this study to learn Chinese?
  - 1a. What were the overall motivational orientation of the participants?
  - 1b. What were the prime motivator(s) for the learners to make effort to their Chinese learning?
  
- 2) Were different groups motivated by different reasons?
  - 2a. What was the effect of gender on the ratings on motivational factors, ideal L2 self and learners' intended effort?
  - 2b. What was the relationship between proficiency in Mandarin Chinese, ideal L2 self and intended effort?
  - 2c. If between group differences were found in 2a and 2b, could cluster analysis find within group difference?
  
- 3) Why did some learners successfully develop their Ideal L2 selves, but some people's Ideal L2 selves were relatively weak?
  - 3a. How was the learners' effort to negotiate their Ideal L2 self mediated by social conditions, or the capital they possessed?
  - 3b. What was the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation?

The first research question and its sub-questions aimed to understand if learners of Chinese in Ireland shared the same mind as the public discourse and the Irish government, who often see learning Mandarin Chinese largely as a vehicle for economic development (i.e., the "winning abroad" strategy in the Irish government's "Action plan for jobs", 2014, p.9-10). 1a and 1b also examine if the instrumental orientation and the ideal L2 self could act as a strong motivator for the participants' learning.

Regarding question 2 and its sub-questions, previous literature has consistently found that male learners have lower motivation than their female counterparts (e.g., Öztürk and Gürbüz, 2013), hold a less positive attitude toward English (Kobayashi, 2002) and tend to weaker L2 possible selves over time (Henry and Cliffordson, 2013). As these studies were mainly conducted to teenagers in the context of learning English as a foreign language, this study investigated if the same phenomenon appeared in adult learners of Chinese.

Another research question this study asks is the relationship between proficiency level and different motivational factors (question 2b). Similar to the overall theme of the study, the investigation is focused on the Ideal L2 self. In fact, SLA researchers' great interest in motivation is largely based on the belief that motivation contributes a great deal to proficiency level. For example, Gardner's Socio-Educational Model is a model aimed to test different motivational factors' effect on linguistic competency. Given

that using a cross-sectional study to establish causal relationships between motivational factors and proficiency level is a matter of controversy (e.g., Crookes and Schmidt, 1991), the major purpose of using proficiency level as a variable is to find out if learners of different level would be motivated differently. The data analytic process is to first examine the correlation between motivational factors and learners' intended effort at different motivational levels, and the results are discussed in more depth using qualitative methodologies. Particular attention is given to the role of the Ideal L2, and its relationship with other motivational factors in the study.

However, even if the overall mean score of a particular group is significantly greater than the other one (between group difference), it would not be surprising that researchers found within group difference if further investigation was conducted. Therefore, question 2c also asked the question if these "deviants", who behaved or were motivated differently from the group they belonged to, can be identified using an exploratory statistical technique of cluster analysis.

Question three and its sub-questions were investigated concurrently with questions one and two, yet they were highly connected. While the first two research questions were the quest for the role of Ideal L2 self and who had a stronger Ideal L2 self, question three attended to the issue of how these phenomena happened using theories from both Sociology and Social Psychology that are often drawn on by Applied linguists.

In bringing the above issues together in the present study, it is hoped that a clearer picture could emerge of what motivates learners of Chinese to make effort to learn the language, and in particular the role of the Ideal L2 self in the process of motivation development. While the research instrument and data analytical techniques will be presented in section 3.5, 3.7 and 3.8 in this chapter, for the interest of clarity, their relationship with the research questions are summarised in table 1:

**Table 1 The research questions of the current study and their corresponding research instruments and analytical tools**

Research Questions	Research Instruments	Analytical techniques
<b>1. What were the motivation for the participants of this study to learn Chinese?</b>	• Questionnaire	<b>Quantitative: Descriptive and inferential statistics</b>
1a. What were the overall motivational orientation of the participants?	• Questionnaire	An Open-ended question in a survey, inferential statistics (One-way repeated measure ANOVA)
1b. What were the prime motivator(s) for the learners to make effort to their Chinese learning?	• Questionnaire	Pearson Correlation
<b>2. Were different groups motivated by different reasons?</b>	• Questionnaire	<b>Quantitative: Inferential statistics</b>
2a. What was the effect of gender on the ratings on motivational factors, ideal L2 self and learners' intended effort?	• Questionnaire	Two samples independent t-test and Pearson Correlation
2b. What was the relationship between proficiency in Mandarin Chinese, ideal L2 self and intended effort?	• Questionnaire	One-way ANOVA, Pearson Correlation and Spearman's rho Correlation
2c. If between group differences were found in 2a and 2b, could cluster analysis find within group difference?	• Questionnaire	Cluster Analysis, Silhouette coefficient, two sample independent t-test and Pearson Correlation
<b>3. Why did some learners successfully develop their Ideal L2 selves, but some people's Ideal L2 selves were relatively weak?</b>	• Semi-Structured Interview	<b>Qualitative</b>
3a. How was the learners' effort to negotiate their Ideal L2 self mediated by social conditions, or the capital they possessed?	• Semi-Structured Interview	Narrative Inquiry/Content analysis <sup>3</sup>
3b. What was the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation?	• Semi-Structured Interview	Narrative Inquiry/Content analysis

<sup>3</sup> Polkinghorne (1995) proposes that there are two types of narrative inquiry, namely analysis of narrative and narrative analysis. The first type of narrative inquiry (i.e., analysis of narrative) takes narratives as data. Benson (2014) holds that the analytical procedures of this type of narrative inquiry has very little difference from standard methods used in qualitative research, such as Grounded theory and Content analysis.

### 3.3 Research design

Research questions one and two are concerned about the relationship among different motivational factors and intended effort, whereas question three involves language learners' personal experience, perceptions and their connection with social context. As the research questions above are very different in their nature, more than one methods are required to answer these questions. Therefore, the research is both cross-sectional and longitudinal in design. First, correlational design was adopted utilizing cross-sectional survey methodology. The purpose of the correlational design was to correlate the scores of the motivational scales on Chinese learning listed in section 3.5 with the score on self-reported intended effort. The design also served to measure the relationship between different types of learners and their ratings on the motivational scales. On the other hand, the longitudinal case study aimed to explore how the motivational development of the three learners of Mandarin was related to their self-identity and social contexts. Moreover, the research design also sought to explore if a rarely used statistical method in Applied Linguistics, cluster analysis, could facilitate or give insight into the case study by classifying learners in terms of their motivational profiles.

Regarding methodology, the cross-sectional study employed a quantitative approach characterised by the inferential statistical technique of Pearson correlation complemented by other techniques such as ANOVAs and cluster analysis; the longitudinal case study was conducted qualitatively analysing three learners' projection of their future-self-concepts and perception of their social context through their narrative. In other words, a mixed-methodological approach was taken. For the multilevel nature of this study, the cross-sectional questionnaire survey and longitudinal semi-structured interviews were conducted concurrently. Dörnyei (2007) points out that the approaches of "sequence" and "dominance" have been the most widely used design in the use of mixed methodology. As indicated by its name, "sequence" design means the implementation of one method (either quantitative or qualitative) is followed by another, such as a questionnaire survey with follow-up interviews. "Dominance" design, on the other hand, means one approach is the main method in the research, and the other one is a supplement. Unlike "sequence" and "dominance" design, *concurrent design* is an approach that quantitative and qualitative methods are used in a separate and parallel fashion.

Despite not as commonly used as "sequence" and "dominance" design, concurrent design is particularly suitable for research that involves both micro and macro perspectives. A case in point is that quantitative research can provide a large-scale trend, whereas qualitative method can help to understand the influence of the trend on individuals through some more focused and fine-grained analysis (Dörnyei, 2007, p.173). Similarly, this approach is also advisable when a research question has different level (ibid).

For the current study focused on the role of the Ideal L2 self at both macro and micro levels, concurrent design was used. Specifically, the macro-level focuses on the role of the Ideal L2 in motivating learners of Chinese; the micro-level inspects the development of the Ideal L2 self of three focal learners.

Therefore, a longitudinal study was conducted over a period of 16 months at intervals of four to six months, depending on the time schedules of the interviewees. The questions of each interviews for each interviewee was slightly different, but the overarching theme of them were to understand why some learners' Ideal L2 selves survive, flourish and become a motivator, whereas some other's Ideal L2 selves remain feeble.

### 3.4 Sample Population

The questionnaire used for the cross-sectional survey was administered to learners of Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language at four universities that provide courses on Mandarin Chinese in Ireland. Two types of learners were excluded from the sample population: 1) Those who were under the age of 18 at the time the questionnaire was administered; and 2) heritage learners of Mandarin Chinese. Based on the participants' self-report proficiency level, the participants were classified into three categories: beginners (N = 48), post-beginners (N = 21) and intermediate learners (N = 23). As Ireland is a small country and Mandarin Chinese is a "late comer" as a foreign language in Ireland, either as a major in Irish Higher Education Institutes or as an extramural activity, the procedure of convenience sampling was used to maximise the sample size.

As far as the participants in the case study were concerned, criterion sampling was adopted. Criterion sampling is a way of examining cases who met "predetermined criterion of importance" (Patton, 1990, p. 176). In the case of this research, the criterion required is that the participants had some traces of the Ideal L2 self: a future specific aspect of Ideal self, which entails the qualities that one would like to become in the future. In particular, the three focal participants presented in chapter five of this study all showed traces of the Ideal L2 self, yet to a different extent, namely: weak, medium and strong level.

### 3.5 Research Instruments

As this study aims to examine Chinese language learner's motivation both quantitative and qualitatively, two research instruments were used. A questionnaire adapted from established instruments was deployed to collect data in order to collect numerical data, semi-structured interviews were also conducted to inquire the development of learners' motivation and self-concepts longitudinally.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adopted mainly from Csizér and Dörnyei's (2005) and Taguchi, Magid and Papi's (2009) studies. Both studies employ the the L2 Motivational Self System to investigate learners' motivation. The first draft of the instrument was piloted in late 2015 and early 2016. Other than the three core factors in the L2 motivational self system, namely ideal L2 self, ought to L2 self, learning experience, the first draft of the instrument for this study also consisted of seven other factors drawn on from the aforementioned studies. They are: instrumentality (promotional), instrumentality (preventional), family influence, attitude to L2 community, cultural interest, linguistic confidence and

motivated learning behaviour (intended effort). Because previous studies in learning Chinese as foreign languages often show the importance of intrinsic motivation, seven items adapted from Noels and his colleagues' Language Learning Orientation Scales (2003) were added on top of these 10 constructs.

The first draft of the questionnaire in the current study contained 72 questions, of which nine were questions regarding learners' linguistic profile such as proficiency level and years of learning; nine were demographic questions (such as learners' gender and educational background). The 11 constructs mentioned in 3.1.1 were measured using a seven-point Likert-scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The draft also consisted of one open-ended question asking participants' reasons for signing up for Chinese classes.

To avoid response bias, two measures were taken in the pilot versions of the questionnaire. First, items were negatively worded at irregular intervals to reduce acquiescence bias. This measure is commonly used in questionnaire survey in order to prevent respondents from habitually answering 'Strongly agree' or 'Strongly disagree' without reading what is being asked carefully. In particular, this measure keeps the respondents alert of the meanings of items (Coolian, 2004, p.179).

Second, except the demographic and screening questions at the beginning and the end of the questionnaire, the items that measured the eleven constructs were randomised. As a result, items that belong to the same construct (latent variable) were not adjacent to each other. Social scientists are often cautious about the order of items in surveys as this can bias how interviewees respond to the question (e.g., Bradburn and Mason, 1964; Krosnick and Presser, 2010 and Yang and Wyckoff, 2010). Bradburn and Mason (1964, p.58) point out that repeated exposure to questions of the same topic (e.g. happiness in one aspect of life) can affect respondents' judgement on the subsequent questions (e.g. happiness in another unrelated aspect of life). These two measures are also taken in the finalised versions of the questionnaires. An example of negatively worded item is question 49: 'I don't like meeting people from Chinese-speaking countries' in appendix one.

Receiving the feedbacks from the participants who took part in the first round of the interviews, some constructs that were found irrelevant during the pilot study were removed in the final version of the questionnaire, some wordings and items were modified. Specifically, the analysis of the pilot data and respondents' feedbacks show that family influence and prevention instrumentality had very little relevance to learning motivation. This can be caused by the facts that the target learners are all adults and they are either native speakers or highly competent speakers of English, the perceived most prestigious language in the world. The number of motivational factors in the finalised questionnaires is therefore reduced to nine, one of which is the dependent variable of this study (i.e., intended effort).

### 3.5.2 The final version of the questionnaire

The total number of items remained 72, of which nine are questions regarding learners' linguistic profile such as proficiency level and years of learning; nine are demographic questions (such as learners' gender and educational background); 54 seven-point likert scale items are used to measure the eight motivational factors and criterion measure in the current study. To ensure the participants are not heritage learners of Chinese, one item in the final section of the questionnaire asked if one of their parents or grandparents were Chinese by ethnicity, those who answered *yes* on this question will be eliminated from the study. The nine constructs in the main body of the questionnaire are as follow (for the full version of the questionnaire, see appendix one):

- 1) *Intrinsic motivation:*  
The scale referred to individuals' motivation to engage in an activity because it is enjoyable and satisfying to do (six items: Question numbers 10, 15, 20, 24, 55 and 62)
- 2) *Attitude towards the target language community:*  
This factor denotes the extent to which the learners had a positive attitude toward the speakers of their target language and the community where the target language was spoken (7 items: Question numbers 12, 32, 49, 51, 56, 58, 60)
- 3) *Cultural interest:*  
The construct measured the learners' interest of the cultural products, history and current affair associated with the Chinese speaking communities (six items: Question numbers 14, 18, 22, 28, 36 and 41)
- 4) *Instrumentality (promotion):*  
This scale related to the regulation of learning behaviour for the sake of pragmatic outcomes with regard to personal development, such as career advancement (7 Items, Question numbers 17, 21, 25, 27, 31, 48 and 52)
- 5) *Ideal L2 self,*  
It related to learners' desires and aspirations concerning using Mandarin Chinese in the future (seven items: Question numbers 30, 34, 35, 39, 40, 44 and 47)
- 6) *Linguistic confidence*  
This scale gauged how confident the participants were with reference to their learning and using of Mandarin Chinese (seven items: Question numbers 38, 43, 46, 50, 53, 57 and 59)
- 7) *Ought L2 self*  
The scale measured the learners' perceived obligation to learn the language and to what extent they were expected to be a speaker of Mandarin Chinese (four items: Question numbers 11, 45, 61 and 63)
- 8) *Attitude toward learning experience*  
It measured the participants' attitudes toward their immediate learning environment, such as their teacher and classroom activities (three items: Question numbers 37, 42 and 54)
- 9) *Intended effort*  
It is the criterion measure of the current study, which was an indicator of the amount of effort that the participants were willing to put into learning Mandarin Chinese (seven items: Question numbers 13, 16, 19, 23, 33, 26 and 29)



Among these items, items 46 and 59 are negatively keyed (negation is used in the sentences, the lower the scores, the less the participants possess the qualities of these motivational dimensions, just as the way that most items do); items 22, 34, 49 and 57 are negatively worded.

### **3.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Three rounds of interviews were conducted in order to better understand learners' change in motivational type and intensity over time. The interviews were conducted at six to seven month intervals. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed immediately after each interview.

#### *3.4.2.1 The first interview (December 2015 to January 2016)*

One of the major aims of the first round of the interviews was to understand the focal participants' background, learning history and motivational orientations as much as possible. Ushioda (2001) suggests that interviewees should not be primed with thoughts about motivation (e.g. aims, goal) if a researcher hope to see their motivational profile itself during the interview. Therefore, the research was very loosely structured and mostly related to their experience and feelings. Each interview began with initial warm-up pleasantries and brief explanation of the purpose of the session and the general aims of the study. The interviewees were also reassured that the research would only go by their pseudonyms in the thesis, and neither their language instructors nor the supervisor of the researcher will have knowledge of their identities and access to the recordings. The interview revolved around four major themes:

Theme 1: When did the learner start learning Mandarin Chinese?

Theme 2: What did they feel about learning Mandarin Chinese?

Theme 3: Why did they decide to do a master's degree in UI?

Theme 4: How was their experience in UI thus far?

#### *3.4.2.2 The second Interview (June to August 2016)*

The second round of the interviews followed up the data elicited from the first round, and focused on whether their motivation and Ideal L2 selves have changed since then. The themes of the interviews were as follow:

Theme 1: Have they become more confident in using Chinese to achieve your goals?

Theme 2: Their experience in UI, and their initiatives to make changes happen if there was something they were not satisfied?

Theme 3: What were their expectations of the upcoming exchange programme (a trip to China to improve their Mandarin Chinese)?

#### *3.4.2.3 The third interview (April to June 2017)*

The third round of the interviews followed up the data elicited from the first two rounds, it was also informed by the findings of the questionnaire survey. The themes of the interviews were as follow. As

the researchers had known the thoughts and the history of the learners quite well, the questions asked in the last interview were highly personalised and contextualised. As the interviews had little in common, the common themes are not drawn and displayed in this section, but in chapter five where the interview data are presented.

At the end of each interview, the participants were asked to indicate their motivation at different stages of learning on a scale between zero and ten, (ten being extremely motivated), using a line graph that illustrates learners' self-reported level of motivation throughout their Chinese learning journey. The stages were the landmarks of the participants' learning journey identified by the author during the interviews. This graph was adapted from Waning and her colleagues' study (2014), where participants in the research were instructed to indicate how motivated they were at regular intervals. After plotting the graph, the participants were asked to explain the waxes and wanes of their motivation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at the convenience of the participants on three occasions over a span of sixteen months: the end of the first term of their studies in UI (December 2015 to January 2016), the end of the second term of their studies in UI (June to August 2016), and four months after their four-month exchange to China (April and May 2017). All the interviews were conducted in English, and the contents were recorded and transcribed (see appendix two), the total length of the interviews for each participant are 132 minutes (Sarah), 157 minutes (Tim) and 115 minutes (Alba). The interview content will be triangulated with their instructor's interview conducted in August 2016 (55 minutes)<sup>4</sup>.

### 3.6 The recruitment of participants

The recruitment of the participants mainly happened in five Mandarin Chinese course providers in Ireland, three of which were in the capital city of Ireland. The participants were all aware that they could give up their task at any time without any consequences, they also understood that all the raw data would be handled only by the researcher of this project.

#### 3.6.1 Recruiting respondents for the questionnaire survey

The draft of the questionnaire was piloted in October 2015 to December 2015 through the researcher's personal network. By mid-December 2015, 30 participants took part in the pilot study. All of the participants at the pilot stage were adult learners of Chinese and non-heritage learners. The finalised version of the instrument was administered between June 2016 and March 2017. A convenience sampling approach was taken to collecting the survey data. Prior to the questionnaire survey, two Chinese instructors acquainted with the researcher were approached. The two instructors were teaching in the University of Ireland at the time when the current study was at the stage of data collection.

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<sup>4</sup> The three participants all attended the same course in the same year, so they had the same instructor.

Through the supervisor of the researcher, two other course providers were also contacted. In total, four course providers took part in the research. With the permission of the instructors and the course coordinators in the institutions, the questionnaires were administered in 12 evening classes and four day-time classes. The questionnaire was also distributed through some focal participants in the qualitative study of this project. They were asked to send it to friends and acquaintances who were learning Chinese at the time when the researcher of this project was collecting data.

In total, 165 questionnaires were distributed, the number of the questionnaires returned was 104, the response rate was 68%. Of the 104 questionnaires, five were incomplete and seven were filled in by heritage learners, which brought the total number of valid questionnaires down to 92. The survey data were then entered into a database using SPSS (version 24) software package, a code was also assigned to each respondent as a case number, and the focal learners' codes are their pseudonyms.

### **3.6.2 Recruiting the focal participants for the longitudinal semi-structured interviews**

At the time when the questionnaire was piloted in 2015, eight respondents of the pilot study agreed to participate in the qualitative part of the current study. Among the eight participants, four of whom were beginners, two were post-beginners and two were at the intermediate level. The initial research design was to interview these eight learners over a period of 16 months in order to examine if the participants would have a noticeable change in motivation. However, after the first two rounds of interviews, the four beginners showed very little change in terms of the type of motivators (the reasons to learn Chinese) and intensity (if they become more/less hard working at some stages). Moreover, the elementary learners also did not show any sign of having developed an Ideal L2 self. Since one of the foci of the qualitative study is to understand how the Ideal L2 self was developed, the absence of the Ideal L2 self in the beginners' motivational profiles meant that they were not suitable for the purposes of the current study. Therefore, no elementary learners took part in the third round of the interview.

Regarding the post-beginners (n=2) and intermediate learners (n=2), one intermediate learner decided to move out of Ireland in late 2016. Therefore, only the two post-beginners and the one intermediate learner participated in the third interview. The three focal participants in this study were all students of a postgraduate program (Master's degree in Chinese Studies) from the University of Ireland (Pseudonym, henceforth, UI). At the time when the longitudinal study started, they had at least two years of Chinese learning history in different learning contexts, including informal learning (e.g., language exchange), evening classes and formal learning (their participation in the post-graduate studies in UI). The rich history of their learning allows the researchers to trace the formation and development of their ideal L2 self at different stages of their learning journey. Table 3.2 summarises some information about the participants:

**Table 2 Profiles of the three participants**

Name	Gender	Age	First language	Years of learning Chinese (at the time they started to study in UI)	Proficiency level
Sarah	Female	26	English	4	Post-beginner
Tim	Male	30	English	2	Post-beginner
Alba	Female	24	Italian	4	Intermediate

It is noted that the researcher has considered the potential impacts of the knowledge gap and unequal relationships in the research setting. There is a knowledge gap between the researcher and the participants in two respects. First, the researcher knows better in motivation research. Second, he is also a competent speaker of the participants' target language. However, since most of the participants are native speaker of English, the most prestigious language in the world, the potential unequal power relationship is off set. Moreover, the researcher had built up rapport during the observation sessions. In fact, the participants' language instructor often used the researcher's mispronunciation of certain words as examples in the classroom. The exposure of the researcher's weakness helped to eliminate the potential inferiority felt by the participants.

### 3.7 The analytical techniques for the questionnaire survey in the current study

The analytical tools used in the current study varied with the types of research questions being answered. Five types of techniques were used for data analysis in the current study, three were quantitative and two were qualitative in their nature (summarised in table 1 in section 3.2). The three types of quantitative techniques are 1) counting the occurrences in an open-ended question regarding the participants' reasons for learning Mandarin Chinese, 2) inferential statistics commonly used in SLA, such as two-samples-independent *t*-tests, one-way ANOVA and Correlations, and 3) an exploratory approach called cluster analysis. Regarding the qualitative data analytical techniques used, one was narrative analysis and the other one was content analysis.

While the first two types of quantitative techniques were either intuitive or commonly used in motivation research, the third techniques, cluster analysis, needs more explanation, as this technique is used relatively scarcely in SLA.

#### 3.7.1 Cluster analysis

Cluster analysis is a technique in statistics for identifying groups or subgroups in a data set based on the similarity of the members/observations in the sample population. Members of a specific cluster, on the one hand, share many similar characteristics, but on the other hand, are very dissimilar to participants

belonging to other clusters. In second language research, researchers in SLA often compare different learners groups by their demographic backgrounds, such as gender (e.g., Öztürk and Gürbüz, 2013) and age (Flege et al., 1999). However, within each age group and gender, there must be some learners who are very different from the majority of members in the same group. The advantage of using cluster analysis is to identify these subgroups within a larger group (Staples and Biber, 2015).

Cluster analysis has been proven a useful technique in many areas, such as Marketing (e. g., (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011) and Health Psychology (e.g., Brandwin et al., 2000). In the domain of Second Language Acquisition, the technique has been used at least for thirty years, although the number is small. For example, Skehan (1986) exploited the technique to investigate if linguistic competency can be achieved by different paths by profiling types of language aptitude. Yamamori and colleagues (2003) argue against the assumption that there is a best learning strategy using the technique, which found that successful learners often employ a wide variety of strategies during their learning journey. In motivation research, both Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) and Papi and Teimouri (2014) identified four motivationally distinct learner groups. Henry (2011) performed a cluster analysis and identified four groups of L3 learners among 101 learners. He then selected one focal interviewee from each group to understand the impact of English as a L2 on the learners' L3 learning motivation. The current study combines the approaches used by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) and Henry (2011). Specifically, the 92 participants in the questionnaire survey who have a homogeneous motivational profile are first grouped together using cluster analysis. Then, the characteristics of each cluster (group) are examined. Case(s) that are of concern to this study detected by cluster analysis are singled out for further investigation using in-depth interviews.

### **3.7.2 Hierarchical cluster analysis**

There are two major types of cluster analysis: hierarchical and non-hierarchical cluster analysis (also known as K-means clustering). Hierarchical cluster analysis generally falls into two types: agglomerative and divisive clustering. This section only reviews agglomerative clustering as it is the method used by most researchers in second language acquisition. In agglomerative hierarchical cluster analysis, each observation (participant) is defined as an individual cluster. The first step of this clustering method is to measure the distances (or dissimilarity) among all the observations. The algorithms that are commonly used for measuring (dis)similarity include Euclidean Distance, Euclidean Distance and City Block Distance. As illustrated in figure 3:

Figure 3 Distances measures in Hierarchical cluster analysis

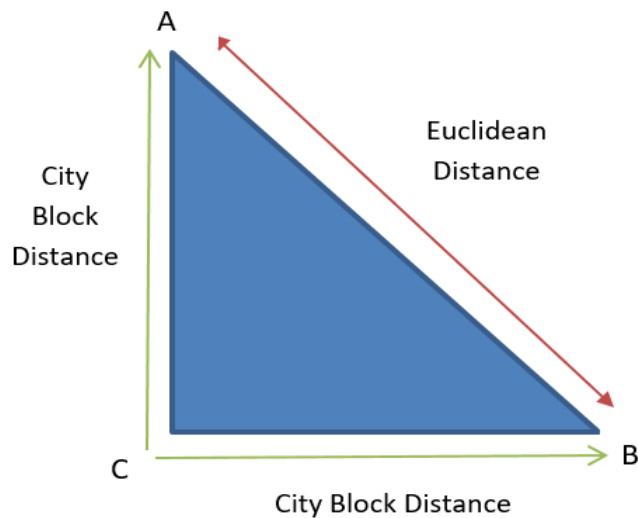


Figure 3 shows that Euclidean Distance between A and B is simply the nearest straight line between the two data points. By extension, Euclidean Distance Squared is the distance between A and B squared. Regarding City Block Distance, the distance between A and B, is the sum of the distance between A and C and C and B (in their absolute values).

After the distances among all observations have been measured, the observations are merged subsequently based on an algorithm of the researchers' choice. Five algorithms are commonly used, which are single linkage, complete linkage, average linkage, centroid clustering and Ward's method (For a more thorough review on these methods, see Everitt et al, 2011). The observations keep merging with one another and form a new cluster until observation is merged into one large cluster. This process can be visualised as a *dendrogram*, a tree-diagram that visually represents the process of clustering (see figure 4) and a scree-plot (see figure 5).

A dendrogram is a visual representation of the clustering process. Observations close to each other (i.e., similar or with short distance) are joined together in the clustering process, denoted by shorter branches in a dendrogram. The longer a branch, the further apart the distance between two clusters. It is often advised to "cut" the tree at the point where exceptionally long vertical branches appear. However, how "long" is long enough is sometimes difficult to interpret visually. For example, figure 4 and 5 are two identical dendrograms, figure 4 illustrates that there are three clusters in the dataset, yet figure 5 demonstrates that four or more cluster solutions are also possible

Figure 4 Dendrogram (Ward's method) generated using the data in the current study (three cluster solution)

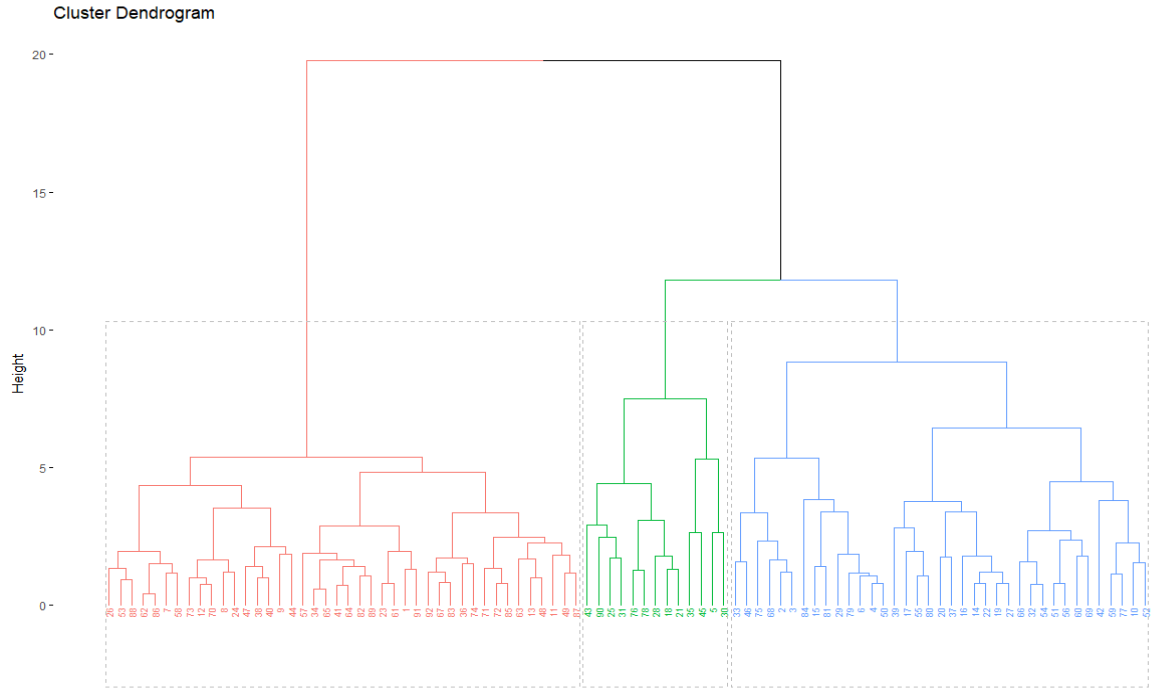
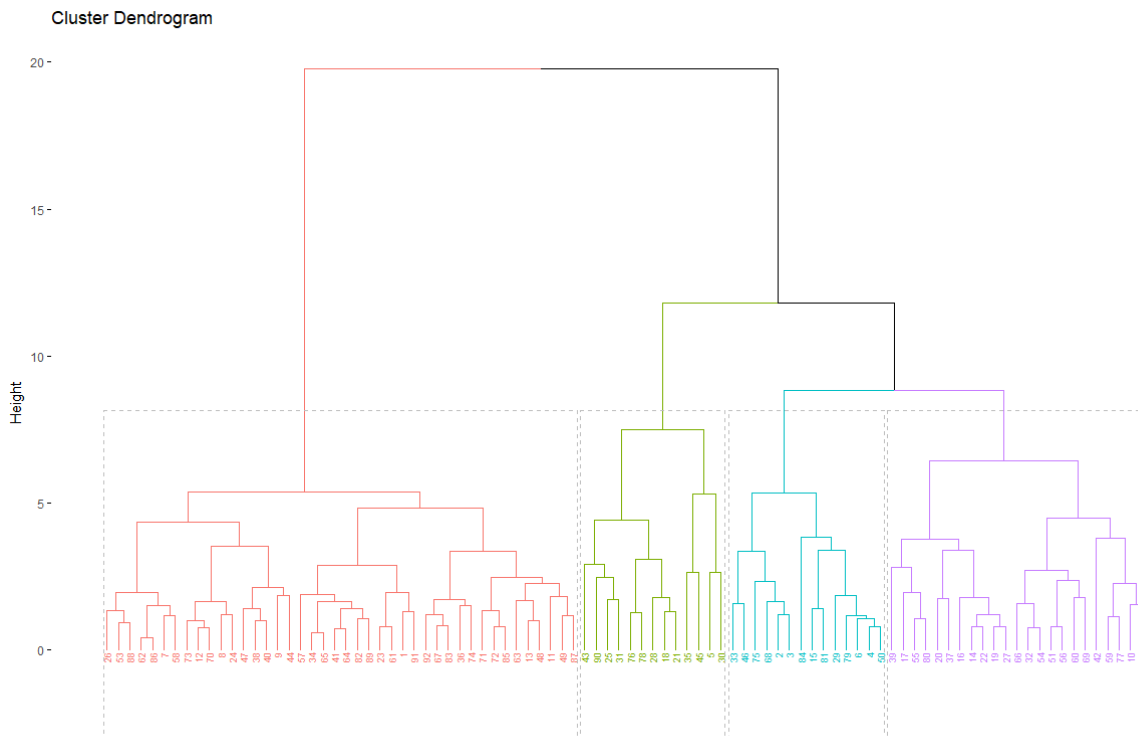


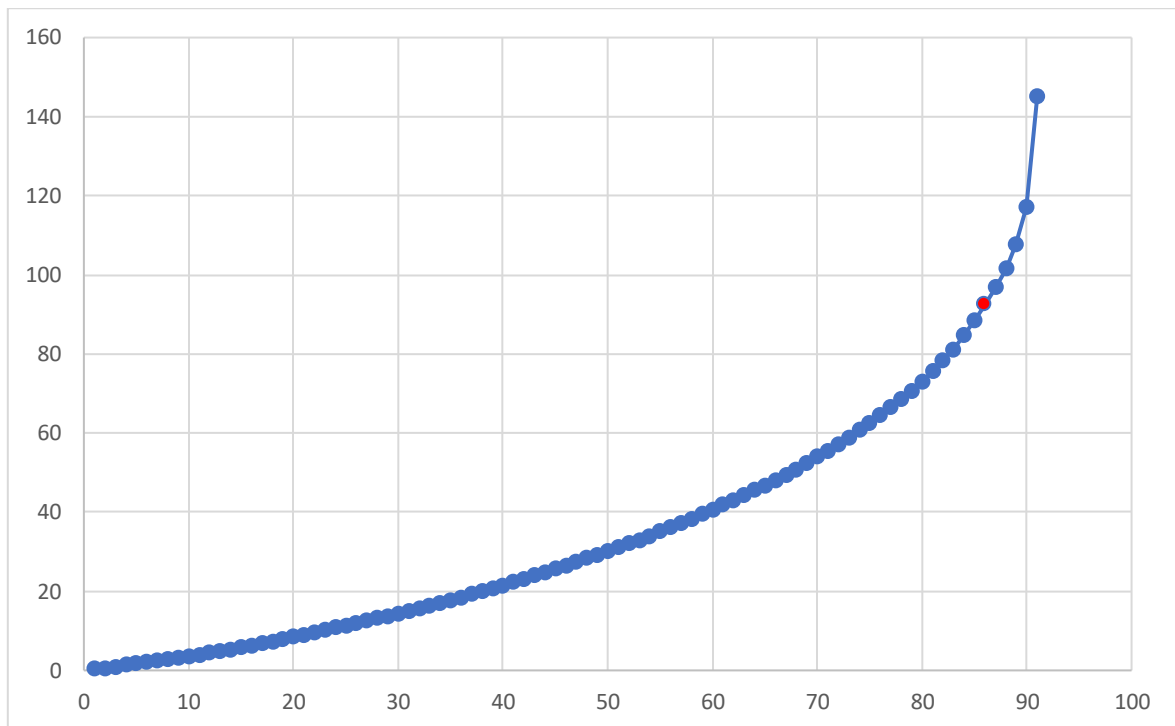
Figure 5 Dendrogram (Ward’s method) generated using the data in the current study (four colour solution)



Using a scree-plot to decide the number of clusters may also face with the same challenge. Similar to dendrograms, a sudden increase in the coefficient value in a scree-plot is an indicator of the number of clusters in the dataset. As a sudden sharp increase in the coefficient in a scree-plot looks like an elbow, the use of this method to decide the number of clusters is also called the elbow method. Nevertheless, sometimes the “elbow” (see figure 6 below) may not be obvious in the scree-plot, as illustrated below:



Figure 6 Scree-plot generated using the data in the current study (Ward's method)



### 3.7.3 K-mean clustering

The process of non-hierarchical cluster analysis, or K-means clustering, can be somewhat difficult to understand as it is not easy to be visualised. In essence, K-means clustering involves the following procedures.

- 1) the researchers are required to specify the number of clusters (K) prior to the analysis, whereas hierarchical analysis does not have the same requirement.
- 2) The initial centre of each cluster is randomly assigned and
- 3) the observations merged with the centroids based on the principle of forming a cluster with the smallest within-group variation (i.e., minimise the within-group sum of square, the concept of sum of square here is the same as that of ANOVA), whereas hierarchical analysis is based on distances among observations.
- 4) Once a new observation is merged into a cluster, a new centre point (centroid) of the cluster is recalculated.
- 5) Then, steps three to four continue until the clusters are stable (i.e., the centroids of the clusters do not shift anymore).

Both hierarchical and K-means clustering have their advantages and disadvantages. Generally speaking, K-means is superior to hierarchical clustering as it is less sensitive to outliers and irrelevant clustering

variables (Mooi and Sarstedt, 2011). However, the outputs (or the final clustering membership of the observations) of K-means clustering are very much dependent on the initial central points (centroid), and researchers may not know how many clusters are in their dataset in advance. Therefore, researchers often used hierarchical clustering to decide the number of clusters, use the centroids defined by hierarchical analysis for the subsequent K-means cluster analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

### **3.7.4 Challenges of using cluster analysis and the approach in this study**

Section 3.7.2 and 3.7.3 has outlined the key procedures, variety, as well as some challenges with using cluster analysis researchers. Two issues are particularly challenging for researchers to use this technique, this section discusses these challenges and how this study sought to solve them.

The first challenge arises from the wide variety of clustering methods. As indicated above, there is a wide range of clustering methods, it is not easy for researchers to choose the among these methods. Mooi and Sarstedt observe that sometimes the definition of a good clustering solution can be “a matter of taste” (2010, p.260). In fact, Clatworthy and colleagues (2005) note that guidelines for researchers to use cluster analysis have not been clear.

Moreover, many specialists would agree that choosing a right number of clusters and validating a cluster solution (e.g., when a researcher choose a three-cluster solution, how does he/she know it is the right number) are among the most challenging procedures in using cluster analysis (Everitt, 2011; Hair et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2013). In the context of second language motivation, Papi and Teimouri (2014) note that not all studies were explicit about their methodological procedures. Clatworthy and colleagues (2005) hold that when there is no clear guideline available, clear reporting of statistical methodology is necessary, as an article in academic journal itself is likely to become the guideline for many.

For clear reporting of methodological procedure, Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) advised that researchers should report five basic types of information while using cluster analysis, namely the 1) computer program, 2) *the similarity measure* (how was the distance among the data point measured), 3) *cluster method* (the algorithm that decides how data points were joined together to form a cluster), 4) *the procedure used to determine the number of clusters* (this is regarded as one of the biggest difficulties in clustering) in the previous chapter), and 5) *evidence for the validity of the clusters* (what makes a “good” cluster, do the outputs meet those criteria). Hair et al. (2010) also suggested that the 6) *sample size* and the 7) *selection of variables* to be clustered should also be taken care of prior to the analysis.

In the next chapter, I will report on the procedure that the cluster analyses are run in this study following the Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) and Hair et al.’s (2013) advice. In the following subsection, I will first report on the five steps taken in the study in order to produce the seven types of information enumerated above.

### **3.7.5: Five steps of clustering and evaluation taken in the current study**

#### *Step 1: Clustering the data using four different algorithms*

Euclidean squared distance was used to measure the distances among all the observations in the data set. Then, the four different algorithms (clustering methods) commonly used in hierarchical cluster analysis are used, namely Ward's method, centroid linkage, average linkage (further divided into within group and between group). In other words, hierarchical clustering is performed four times, and the algorithm (clustering methods) used each time is different. Although both Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) and Papi and Teimouri (2014) used Ward's method as their clustering method, the current study used four different methods and different results of the methods were compared. Mooi and Sarstedt (2011) stress that different algorithms can yield very different outcomes. Therefore, the group belonging of an observation sometimes can be a product of the algorithm used, rather than its inherent similarity or dissimilarity to other observations. To reduce the negative impact due to methodological variation, Hair and colleagues (2010) suggest researchers can generate a complete list of possible solutions, and compare the quality of the solutions in the process of cluster evaluation. The evaluation measures of this study are presented from step four to seven in this section.

#### *Step 2: Generating a complete list of possible clustering solutions based on step 1*

As hierarchical cluster analysis is performed four times using four different algorithms (see step 1), four dendrograms and four scree-plots were generated. They are used as visual aids for the researcher of this project to decide the optimal number of cluster in this study. However, the number of clusters is not always obviously illustrated even with the help of the visual aids. Therefore, a list of all possible solutions is produced.

In particular, taking figure 6 in section 3.7.1 as an example, it is illustrated that there is a sharp increase in agglomerative coefficient appeared from stage 86, this sharp increase in the coefficient formed an "elbow" shape in the scree-plot (marked as red in the figure). Hence, the optimal number of clusters is six (i.e. 86 subtracted from 92) for Ward's method. In a more statistical term, classifying the data set into more than six clusters (i.e., beyond stage 86, examine from right to left) would not explain more variance in the model (i.e., would not give us much more information about the data set, as stage 85 and 86 are very close, which means the marginal percentage of variance can be explained is decreasing drastically).

Nonetheless, where the "elbow" is located is not always unambiguous. As the visual aids only gave researchers a rough guide regarding the optimal number of clusters, a complete list of all possible solutions was produced for further investigation. Based on the dendrograms and scree-plots, a complete list of possible clustering solutions was generated. For example, figure 6 illustrates that a "big jump" of the scree-plot could be interpreted as happening anywhere between step 86 and 91, therefore, six, five, four, three and two were all possible clustering solutions when Ward's method was used.

Following the same procedure, the scree-plots generated by three other clustering algorithms were also produced. Based on the outputs of the hierarchical clustering methods, the researcher will perform a series of K-means cluster analyses, the output the K-means clustering will then be used to generate another complete list of clustering solutions that summarises all the possible clustering solutions of the K-means clustering (see table 12 in the next chapter).

#### *Step 3: Evaluating the clustering solutions internally*

After a complete list of possible solutions is generated, one should evaluate the qualities of these solutions internally and select the best one. Internal measures are methods that gauge the goodness of a clustering structure using internal information only, which means, the information used in the process of clustering. One of such methods is to evaluate a clustering solutions' cluster cohesion within a cluster and cluster separation among different clusters. Cluster cohesion is about the average distance among the observations *within a cluster*. Similarly, cluster separation entails the *distance among different clusters*. A good clustering solution is defined as having a small value of average within group distance (in terms of sum of square) and a large value of between group distance. Two commonly used measures for evaluating the cluster cohesion and separation are silhouette coefficient and variance ratio criterion (VRC). This study will use silhouette coefficient (also known as average silhouette width) to evaluate the quality of clustering solutions, for the function is available on SPSS version 24. Average Silhouette width measures the *compactness* among observations (data points) and the *isolation* among clusters (groups). The index varies from -1 to 1, the larger the index (closer to 1), the better the clustering. In other words, an optimal cluster solution (optimal number of cluster) is the one that has the highest Average silhouette width. As we have seen in table 3.1, there were 19 possible clustering solutions and therefore K-means clustering was performed 19 times. To evaluate the internal quality of each solution, the silhouette coefficient of each solution was calculated, which is presented in table 4.10 in the next chapter.

#### *Step 4: Using Cohen's Kappa to evaluate the stability of the clustering solutions*

Relative criteria involve the comparison between different clustering solutions, between the outputs of the same solutions using different algorithms, or between other clustering solutions generated from another data set. Mooi and Sarstedt (2011) suggest that these comparisons can make sure the stability of a clustering solution: If the observations (e.g. the learners in the current study) share similar characteristics, their group membership would not change dramatically if another clustering methods (see step 1). In the case of this study, Cohen's Kappa will be used.

Cohen's Kappa (Cohen's K) can be used to validate a clustering solution by testing the agreement among different cluster solutions. In a non-statistical term, if there is an underlying structure in a data set, using different methods would yield the same results, given the methods are suitable for answering the research questions. Similarly, if some participants are truly similar to each other, they would be

found in the same group no matter which method is used, as long as the methods are the suitable one. In a similar vein, if some participants are vastly different from each other, they would not belong to the same cluster. Cohen's Kappa is an index to indicate to what extent the groupings of different analyses are similar to each other or agree with each other.

Cohen's Kappa is an index that ranges from zero to one. It is generally agreed that the value of Cohen's Kappa should not be lower than 0.4 (indicating group membership changes drastically if a different method is used), a value of 0.7 is regarded as evidence of relatively high grouping agreement between two clusters (Finch, 2005). In the context of cluster analysis, the cluster solutions are regarded to have high relative validity if Cohen's Kappa is higher than 0.7. For example, imagine a teacher categorised 40 students into two groups, good students and bad students, and the categorisation was done again by another teacher. If 13 students were categorised as good for the first teacher, and the same 13 students were also categorised as good by the second teacher, the Cohen's Kappa will be 1, as their judgements (grouping) is the same. However, if the two teachers' judgements were the exact opposite of each other's (i.e., the 13 students were considered as bad students by the second teacher, and the other 27 students were regarded as good), then the value of Cohen's Kappa will be 0.

*Step 5: Using a criterion measure to evaluate the External validity of the final solution.*

External validation involves how well a cluster solution matches some external structure, or the "ground truth" about the data set (Tan et al., 2013). While some researchers regard external validation is advisable, the principal of using the "ground truth" to validate the result is somewhat contradictory to the purpose of cluster analysis (Rendon, et al., 2011). Specifically, as an exploratory technique, cluster analysis is often used because the investigators do not have the "ground truth". As Rendon and colleagues questions the usefulness of external validation in dealing with real problems, as they state: "usually, real problems do not have prior information of the dataset in question" (2011, p.27).

Having said that, previous literature (e.g., Csizér and Dörnyei, 2005 and Papi and Teimouri, 2014) in SLA found that learners with different motivational profiles often had different level of intended effort, hence, this study also used intended effort as a criterion measure as a form of external evaluation of the final clustering solution. However, it should be noted that comparing different groups' level of intended effort is not only conducted only because the clustering solution needs to be externally validated, but also one of the research questions of the current study. Specifically, cluster analysis serves to explore if motivational profiles not based on learners' demographic backgrounds can be identified on the one hand, and single out special cases that have not been found out using traditional statistical methods on the other hand. These special cases are expected to be among the five focal post-beginner and intermediate learners in the current study.

### 3.8 The analytical techniques for the semi-structured interviews: Narrative inquiry

In this section, I will review the analytical technique used for the analysis of the qualitative data in this study, namely narrative inquiry. This technique is adopted to answer the two sub-questions (3a and 3b) respectively:

3a: What was the role of capital in the focal learners' negotiation of the Ideal L2 self

3b: What was the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation?

#### 3.8.1 What is narrative and narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is defined as research that centres on narrative (Benson, 2014). Although narrative had long been associated with "story telling" by historians in the last century, different disciplines of social science have reconceptualised that narrative is a way that individuals make sense of the world and self-identities since the 1960s and 1970s (Somers, 1994).

Having said that, there are many ways that individuals can make sense of the world and themselves using narrative. In the past two decades, narrative inquiry has become a more important approach in applied linguistics, but what it means by "narrative" in the field, just like other disciplines, is somewhat ambiguous. Benson (2014) identifies four major conceptualisations of narratives in applied linguistics. They are 1) a general story that consists of a beginning, orientation, the development of a storyline and ended with a conclusion; 2) a story which an individual tells people who they are (self-identity); 3) A "Grand narrative about the ideologies of a society/culture that holds sway over the discourses of different aspects of lives and 4) a series of small stories. Since the term *narrative* has such as wide-ranging conceptualisation, Barkhuizen holds that the meaning of "narrative" itself in a research setting is "notoriously hard to define" (Barkhuizen, 2013, p.2).

In fact, Benson observes that applied linguists do not often focus on a coherent definition of narrative, but the functions of it. Since self-identity is at the centre of the current study, I will use Murray's (2000) definition of narrative, which conceptualises narrative as a mean for human to give meaning to the world and themselves. Since one's self-identities and the social world are constantly changing, there is a need for human being to tell a cohesive story of themselves and the world. Therefore, narrative is a mean for an individual to "do order to disorder" (Murray, 2000, p.338).

#### 3.8.2 Two types of narrative inquiry: Analysis of narrative and narrative analysis

Besides the definition of narrative, what it means by *narrative inquiry* is another challenge that researchers are faced with. Barkhuizen (2014) notes that narrative inquiry has become an umbrella term for qualitative studies to which informants' experience is central. Applied linguists sometimes use other terms in the place of narrative inquiry, such as life history, language learning history, language learning experience and autobiography, to name but a few (Benson, 2014). Polkinghorne's (1995) taxonomy of

narrative inquiry provides researchers with a rather convenient conceptual lens that makes the seemingly disorganised approach becomes more manageable to those who are new to narrative inquiry. In particular, Polkinghorne (1995) categorises narrative inquiry into *analysis of narrative* and *narrative analysis*. Analysis of narrative denotes the use of narrative as data: analysing narratives using standard procedures widely used in qualitative research, such as content analysis and grounded theory; whereas *narrative analysis* refers to the configuration of some plots and elements in narratives into a coherent account that explains a phenomenon, an individual's actions and choice.

*Analysis of narrative (narrative as data)*

Smith and Sparkes (2006) observe that Polkinghorne's (1995) categorisation is a matter of researchers' standpoint. If a researcher chooses to use *analysis of narrative*, they are "story analyst who conducts an analysis of narrative and thinks about stories" (Smith and Sparkes, 2006, p.185).

Analysis of narrative is the most frequently used approach in applied linguistics (Benson, 2014). For the close association between narrative and self-identity, studies that adopted this approach are very much related to self-identity (e.g., Coffey and Street, 2008; Miller, 2010 and Norton and Early, 2011). For example, analysing the life narratives of two British learners of French, Coffey (2010) teased out how the learners' experience of "Frenchness", the symbolic representation of French, was constructed by the learners themselves situating their narratives into a wider discourse about French culture. Another example is Norton and Early (2011) who used small stories as data to evaluate researchers' self-identity. They identified four often recurred self-identities, namely "researcher as international guest, researcher as collaborative member, researcher as teacher, and researcher as teacher educator" (Norton and Early, 2011, p. 424).

Jing-Schmidt and colleagues' (2016) study that examines study overseas experience of four heritage learners of Mandarin's Chinese shows learners can develop a counter narrative in the face of being positioned in an undesirable self-identity. Analysing the journals kept by four heritage learners of Chinese while they were studying in China, Jing-Schmidt and colleagues investigated how the learners interpreted their experience and strengthened their identity narratively.

They coded the learners' narrative in China into different themes and investigated these themes against the two theoretical frameworks used in the study (Wenger's Community of Practice and Turner et al.'s Self-Categorization Theory) and found that some heritage learners might experience racial bias so that they chose to strengthen their American self-identities narratively while interacting with their Chinese interlocutors. As a result, learning in the country where their target language is spoken became less appealing.

While using narratives as data is by far more common than using narratives to retell stories (narrative analysis) in applied linguistics, there are some examples that the latter was used in the field (e.g., Canagarajah, 2012; Hayes, 2010 and Liu and Xu, 2011) which will be discussed in the next subsection.

#### *Narrative analysis (narrative as story)*

As mentioned above, the difference between *analysis of narrative* and *narrative analysis* lies in researchers' standpoint. If researchers using analysis of narrative, they are the analyst of the data, or narrative; if researchers employ narrative analysis, they are story tellers. Smith and Sparkes holds that when the inquiry ends, what a researcher produced in analysis of narrative are abstract ideas, (e.g., the types of identities identified by Norton and Early in their paper in 2011). However, if the researcher chose to use narrative analysis, the research would produce a story based on the data. Smith and Sparkes note that the participants' story of themselves are for the sake of others just as much as for themselves" (ibid, p.185).

An example of using narrative analysis is Canagarajah's study (2012), which is also an autobiography of the researcher's professional development as an English teacher and a scholar. The article is a reflection of the roles in which he played and to which he moved at different stages of his professional life, and how these roles shaped his professional identities. Hayes (2010) examined the life history of a Tamil teacher of English extensively with the aims to explore the teacher's reasons for becoming an English teacher; professional training and his work and life in a conflicted region of Tamils. In both cases, the phenomena, or the data were examined and the stories were told from the perspectives of the participants themselves, rather than investigated through the lenses of theoretical frameworks nor interpreted by the researchers.

#### **3.8.3 This study**

As this study examines the three focal learners' language learning history through the lens of Wenger's community of practice (1998), Markus and Nurius' possible selves (1986) and Bourdieu's notion of capital (1986), the analytical method used for the qualitative data falls into the category of analysis of narrative. In fact, Benson (2014) holds that this type of narrative inquiry has very little different from some standard procedures used in qualitative research such as Grounded theory and Content analysis. Since this study is guided by the three theories mentioned above, content analysis is used. In other words, the three focal learners' learning history (narratives) will be used as data, and they will be categorised thematically and analysed through the lenses of different theoretical models.

The researcher of the current study will first identify different themes from the learners' narratives. Then, I will examine these themes against the conceptual categories within community of practice, possible selves and capital to describe the associations between the themes in the narratives and the conceptual constructs of the three frameworks.



This study organises the three focal learners' narratives following Pavlenko's (2007) categorisation of the three types of reality in narratives, which are:

- 1) subject reality: what is true to the narrators, it often concerns the interpretation of their narrators' experience and feelings.
- 2) Life reality: what truly happened in the narrators' life, the factual reality.
- 3) Text reality: the way that the narrators talk about their story.

The current study deals with two types of reality: subject reality and life reality. In the first round of the coding, the researcher highlighted what appeared as important to this study. Then, the researcher separated these elements in terms of life reality. The next step involves categorising these *reality* into some more tangible themes. For example, life reality will be further broken down into different groups, such as what kind of jobs that the learners had; their educational background; socio-economic status and how they achieved it. Regarding subject reality, I will group them into themes such as their perception of their language teachers, self-efficacy and self-identity.

In the last round of the coding, I will group the elements from life reality (e.g., educational background, native languages etc) in terms of Bourdieu's four form of capital (1986), namely economic capital (e.g., money, assets); cultural capital (e.g., educational background, native language); social capital (social networks, connections) and symbolic capital (e.g., social status, often supported by the other three forms of capital, reputation).

As far as the subjective reality is concerned, I will categorise them based on the other two theoretical frameworks. Specifically, the learners' initiatives to learn the language and reaction to the results of them will be examined through the lens of community; whereas the learners' interpretation of their initiatives, the results of the them, and their reaction will be examined from the perspective of practice and possible selves (who the learners thought they were). The findings will be presented in chapter five of this study.

### 3.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have detailed the objectives (section 3.2), research design (3.3), sample population (3.4), research instruments (3.5), data collection procedure (3.6) of this study from section. In section 3.7 and 3.8, I also reviewed the two analytical techniques employed (cluster analysis and narrative inquiry) for analysing the data collected by the two research instruments: questionnaire survey and semi-structured interview. To summarise, this study aims to 1) investigate adult learners' motivation for learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language in Ireland, 2) the motivational profiles of different groups and 3) the role of the Ideal L2 self in different type of learners; as well as 4) the formation and roles of the Ideal L2 self in their learning journey. The first three areas are examined using a questionnaire survey and analysed using mainly inferential statistics and cluster analysis. The fourth

area of inquiry are examined through semi-structured interviews and analysed using narrative inquiry/content analysis. In the next chapter (chapter four), the findings of the questionnaire survey will be presented, followed by the presentation and analysis of the qualitative data in chapter five.

## **Chapter 4: Findings of the survey**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings of the questionnaire survey, answers research questions one and two presented in the preceding chapter (see section 3.2). This chapter consists of six parts. Section 4.1 reports on the internal reliability of the research instrument (i.e., the questionnaire). Then, the overall motivational profile of the respondents is present in section 4.2. Section 4.3 presents the correlation between the eight motivational factors and the self-reported motivational level (Intended effort, the criterion measure in the questionnaire survey) in order to identify the factors that provided impetus to the participants' learning. After presenting the overall motivational profile of the participants, section 4.4 and 4.5 entail some more fine-grained analyses as they entail findings regarding the effect of gender on motivation level, and the relationship between proficiency level and motivation respectively. Section 4.6 follows up the findings in 4.5 and examines if the participants with different levels of competency were driven by different motivational factors. Section 4.7 gives an account of the process of an exploratory approach used in the current study, cluster analysis. The purpose of using cluster analysis is to examine the data set from a more data-driven perspective, which aims to identify special cases in the data set that might not have been recognised otherwise (research question 2c). Since the details of the steps taken in the process of performing cluster analysis have already been presented in chapter three, only a brief recapitulation is necessary in section 4.7. Section 4.8 presents the characteristics of the groups identified by the analysis used in section 4.7. It also explains how cluster analysis could identify learners in different demographic/proficiency groups yet share the same motivational profile.

Before presenting the motivational orientations of the participants, it is necessary to briefly describe some background characteristics of the participants. Among the 92 valid questionnaires, 53 respondents were male (58%), 39 respondents were female (42%). Most participants have learned Mandarin Chinese for two years or shorter (68%). Although the participants varied in age (from 18 to over 60), the majority of them were from the age groups of 21 to 25 (29 out of 92, or 31.5%), 26 to 30 (18 out of 92, or 19.6%) and 18 to 20 (16.3%). Interestingly, 8.7 % of the participants (8 out of 92) were from the age group of 61 years old or above, jointly with the age group of 31 to 35, formed the fourth biggest age group in the survey. This might reflect that some participants would learn a foreign language even if they do not need to develop their career.

### **4.2 Internal reliability and normality of the constructs (variables)**

Before displaying the data analysis procedure and findings, I will first show the internal reliability of the instrument used in this study. As shown chapter 4, this questionnaire used in this study is designed to measure nine constructs, and each construct is gauged by a multi-item scale. The inquiry of internal reliability asks the question: is the multi-item scale consistent within itself? Putting it another way, a

scale with high internal reliability means the answer of one item is similar to that of the other items. If the ratings of the items in a scale vary among themselves greatly, these items are unlikely measuring the same construct (Coolican, 2004).

Statistically speaking, if all the items in a scale (e.g., the popularity of a language learning application) are highly correlated with each other and with the total score of all the items, it is an internally reliable measure (Dörnyei, 2007). The most frequently used technique to measure internal reliability is Cronbach's alpha, or Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (Cronbach, 1951). The internal reliability of a (multi-item) scale is expressed in terms of a scale between 0 and 1, the higher the number, the more reliable the scale is.

In the case of this study, it is proposed that 54 items in the questionnaire (questions 10 to 63) measured 9 constructs. 4.1 shows the item numbers, the Cronbach's alpha, as well as a sample item of each construct:

**Table 3 the composition of each construct and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of them**

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>	<b>sample item</b>
Intrinsic motivation	Items: 10, 15, 20, (24), 30, 55 and 62	0.77	I'm learning Chinese because I like to learn new things.
Attitude towards the target language community	Items: 12, 32, 49, 51, 56, 58, 60	0.82	Native Chinese-speakers are very friendly.
Cultural interest	Items: 14, 18, 22, (28), 36 and 41	0.74	I'm interested in the history of China.
Promotional instrumentality	Items: 17, 21, 25, 27, 31, 48 and 52	0.85	I'm learning Chinese because speaking Chinese will enhance my skill-set.
Ideal L2 Self	Items: 34, 35, 39, 40, 44 and 47	.77	I can imagine myself being a competent speaker of Chinese in the future.
Linguistic confidence	Items: 38, 43, 46, (50), 53, (57) and 59	0.70	I'm sure that I'll be able to learn Chinese well.
ought to L2 self	Items: 11, (45), 61 and 63	0.71	I'm learning Chinese because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak Chinese
Attitude toward learning experience	Items: 37, (42), 54	0.62	I like the atmosphere of my Chinese classes.
Learners' intended effort	Items: 13, 16, 19, 23, 26, 29 and (33)	0.89	I'm trying as hard as I can to learn Chinese.

It is noted that some item numbers (the second column) are bracketed, it means these items were eliminated in the process of calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The reason for their omission is that the coefficient would become lower (i.e., less reliable) if they remained in the scale. While some of the scales would not be greatly influenced by the inclusion of the bracketed items, two constructs (Linguistic confidence and the ought to L2 self) would have a much smaller coefficient if every item was included. Therefore, the internal reliability was calculated without the items in brackets so as to yield the maximum Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each construct.

As shown in table 3, most scales have an alpha of 0.7 or above, which means there is a strong internal reliability in these scales, as it is generally advised that a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or above is an acceptable level of internal reliability. However, Kline (2000) argued that it is not unusual to find an alpha below 0.7 in social sciences. It is also common to see applied linguists use scales with an alpha between 0.6 and 0.7 (e.g., Dörnyei, et al., 2006). Therefore, although Attitude toward immediate learning experience in this study is smaller than 0.7 (alpha = 0.62), it can be regarded as a valid construct.

#### 4.3 Research question 1a: The overall motivational orientations of the participants

##### 4.3.1 Motivational orientations of the learners

Although some participants may not see Mandarin Chinese as a means of career advancement, most participants expressed their aspiration to use Mandarin Chinese at work or future career (78 out of 92, or 85%), as indicated by their answer in question 9, an open-ended question where the respondents stated their reasons for learning the language (see appendix 1). An interesting phenomenon that stood out in the data is that the participants' interest in Chinese language, culture as well as career advancement often co-occurred in the open-ended question. Specifically, more than 90% of the participants (86 out of 92) reported that their interest in Chinese culture was a reason for them to learn Mandarin Chinese. However, only about 78% (or 72 participants) reported that they learned Mandarin Chinese because it is an interesting language. The relatively low percentage might have been caused by the conceptualisation of "culture" in the minds of the participants. In particular, those who reported their enjoyment for learning about Chinese culture might also associate the language as part of Chinese culture. Thus, those who only reported themselves as a lover of Chinese culture might also have the language encompassed in their definition of Chinese culture. Table 4 summarises the major reasons why the learners decided to learn Mandarin Chinese. As the respondents could state more than one reasons, the total number of occurrences of the reasons do not add up to 92 (the sample size in the study).

**Table 4 The major reasons for the participants to learn Mandarin Chinese**

Reasons	Occurrences	Percentage (%) <sup>5</sup>
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<sup>5</sup> The percentages were rounded to the nearest whole number

Like Chinese culture	86	93%
Career advancement	78	85%
Chinese is an interesting language	72	78%
Want to travel to China	65	71%
Personal reasons	4	4%

The co-existence of intrinsic motivation (find enjoyment in learning about Chinese language and culture) and extrinsic motivation (learning the language for career advancement) in the participants is also reflected in the scale data. Table 5 illustrates that the means scores of both Intrinsic motivation ( $M = 5.49$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and Instrumentality-promotion ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) are quite high compared with the other scales.

Dörnyei (2009) proposed that researchers should separate the promotional aspect from the prevention aspect of instrumentality, or instrumental motivation, as the former is associated with one's personal goal, and the latter involves prevention of unpleasant outcomes. Looking at instrumentality from this perspective, intrinsic motivation and instrumentality are by no means mutually exclusive. In fact, if instrumentality is understood as a type of extrinsic motivation (e.g., integrated or identified motivation, see chapter two), the compatibility of Instrumentality-promotion and intrinsic motivation is even more noticeable. As explained in section 2.1.2 in Chapter two, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation should be understood as a continuum, for there are different types of extrinsic motivation. If a learner is extrinsically motivated, but by integrated and identified motivation (see section 2.1.2), the learner is very likely to see eye to eye with the one who put pressure to them. In other words, the goal set by the others is also something the learners are eager to achieve.

To confirm if the participants saw the intrinsic and extrinsic values of Mandarin Chinese as equally important, a paired samples *t*-test was performed. The test result showed that the numerical difference in the ratings of Intrinsic motivation ( $M = 5.49$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and instrumentality ( $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) was not significant,  $t(91) = -0.86$ ,  $p = 0.39$ . In other words, the scale data were consistent with the finding of the open-ended question in the first part of the questionnaire.

Another reason that the participants attended to a Mandarin Chinese class was travelling. Table 4 illustrates that 71% of the participants would like to visit Chinese speaking countries. This can be one of the reasons why the respondents' rating on the Attitude to L2 communities was quite high ( $M = 5.45$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). In fact, it is not surprising at all that the participants would have a positive attitude towards the L2 communities. As Gardner (1985) succinctly holds that it is unimaginable for one who hates a country but learns the language spoken by its people.

**Table 5 Means score of the motivational factors**

Constructs	Means	Standard deviations (SD)
Attitude toward learning experience	5.81	1.01
Intrinsic motivation	5.49	0.90
Attitude toward L2 community	5.45	1.05
Instrumentality (Promotion)	5.39	1.13
Ideal L2 self	5.14	1.02
Cultural interest	4.92	1.10
Linguistic Confidence	4.16	1.02
Ought to L2 self	3.20	1.11
Intended effort	4.66	1.23

#### 4.3.3 The self-concepts in the study

As “L2 selves” are the central concept investigated in the current study, this section also profiles some characteristics concerning the participant’s self-concepts. Three aspects of L2 selves were examined in this study, which included the ideal L2 self, the ought to L2 self and self-efficacy (linguistic confidence).

The mean values illustrated in table 5 (see above) suggest that the learners had developed a moderately strong ideal L2 self ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). However, their self-efficacy of learning Chinese is of medium strength, as the mean value was just over the middle point of the scale ( $M = 4.16$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ). This might have caused by the firmly held conception that Chinese is a difficult language compared to other major European languages.

The table also shows that the rating on the ought to L2 self was by far the lowest among all motivational scales ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ). This could have resulted from two reasons. First, the learners in the study were all adults so that they were not susceptible to external pressure (e.g. pressure from parents). Second, the participants’ high English level might have offset their fear for failing in their Mandarin Chinese course. As English enjoys a special status as the world’s lingua franca and serves as a gateway to many opportunities, the participants’ mastery of the language<sup>6</sup> means that they have already had the most important linguistic capital in their hands. For this reason, they did not feel they were obliged to learn the language.

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<sup>6</sup> The participants in this study were either native speakers of English or highly competent users of English



#### 4.3.4 The learners' Intended effort

In fact, the relatively low mean score on Intended effort ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) provides evidence that supports the argument that the learners did not feel a strong obligation to advance their proficiency in Chinese. Table 5 indicates that the self-reported intended effort only marginally exceeded the midpoint of the scale (4.66 out of 7), well below what was found in the EFL context, such as Papi's (2010) study in Iran (4.5 out of 6); You and Dörnyei's (2016) study in China (4.32 out of 5) and Dörnyei and colleagues' (2006) study in Hungary (ranged from 4.32 to 4.46 out of 5 between 1993 and 2004).

Previous quantitative studies conducted by Csizér and Lukacs (2010), Dörnyei and colleagues (2006) and Henry (2010, 2011) all suggest that learners' third language motivation was negatively affected when they were learning English as a second language. In particular, intended effort of learning German was found lower than that of learning English in Csizér and Lukacs's (2010) study. In Dörnyei and colleagues' (2006) research, the prospective learners of German and Russian also reported a weaker intended effort compared to those who planned on learning English, and the trend was stable across a span of 12 years.

As the participants in the current study were either native speakers of English ( $n = 65$ ) or competent speakers of English ( $n = 27$ ), it is not possible to compare the effect of English as a second language on the motivation of Chinese. However, the relatively low intensity of the respondents' motivation (intended effort) raises the question whether the mastery of English *per se* is a demotivator for learning a second/foreign language.

#### 4.4 The motivational factors and intended effort

This section answers research question three: how did the eight motivational factors relate to the participants' intended effort. Despite the high ratings received by Attitude towards L2 community, Intrinsic motivation and Instrumentality-promotion, the high ratings on these factors might not be proportionally translated into the same amount of learning effort. For example, previous studies found that the causality between attitude and action is indirect and sometimes controversial in psychology (e.g., Ajzen and Fishben, 1977; Fazio et al., 1989 and Kelmen, 1974). Therefore, a positive attitude toward a community does not necessarily lead to the learning of the language spoken in that particular community. Similarly, many people would consider speaking a second or foreign language would help to advance their career, yet only a fraction of them would actually take action to learn one. Therefore, the participants who had a positive attitude to the L2 communities and learning Chinese itself (intrinsic motivation) may not mean they were motivated by them. To find out the relationship between different aspects of motivation and intended effort, Pearson correlations were performed. The correlation matrix below (table 6) demonstrates that except the Ought to L2 self, all of the motivational factors in inquiry in this study had a positive significant correlation with Intended effort to different degrees.

The correlation matrix illustrates that three factors were strongly associated with the learners' intended effort. These factors were, in the order of strength, Cultural Interest,  $r = .58, p < 0.01$ , Attitude toward L2 community,  $r = .52, p < 0.01$  and intrinsic motivation,  $r = .50, p < 0.01$ .

**Table 6 Correlation matrix for all scale variables in this study**

	Intended effort	Attitude toward L2 community	Intrinsic motivation	Cultural interest	Instrumentality-promotion	Ideal L2 self	Linguistic confidence	Ought_to_L2	Attitude to L2 learning experience
Intended Effort	1.00								
Attitude toward L2 community	.52**	1.00							
Intrinsic motivation	.50**	.61**	1.00						
Cultural interest	.58**	.71**	.62**	1.00					
Instrumentality	.23*	.45**	.40**	.26*	1.00				
Ideal L2 self	.45**	.56**	.54**	.53**	.48**	1.00			
Linguistic Confidence	.29**	.02	.27**	.10	.12	.39**	1.00		
Ought to L2	.13	.20	.05	.22*	.24*	.15	-.07	1.00	
Attitude to L2 learning experience	.22*	.40**	.39**	.26*	.23*	.20	.08	-.06	1.00

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

It is also shown that the ideal L2 self was significantly correlated with learning effort, which is consistent with previous studies in the context of learning English. However, there was only a moderate correlation between the ideal L2 self and learners' intended effort,  $r = .45, p < 0.01$ . This figure appears to be quite different from the findings in previous studies. Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) claimed that the ideal L2 self was "typically" able to explain over 40% (i.e.  $r^2 = .4$ ) of the variance in learners' intended effort (2011, p.87). The correlation coefficient in this study (.46) means that only around 20% of the variance in the participants' intended effort can be accounted for by the Ideal L2 self. Although some studies yielded a lower coefficient than what Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) described, the correlation coefficients found in these studies were above or equal to .5 (e.g., Lamb, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009 and You and Dörnyei, 2016).

One of the reasons for the relatively low correlation coefficient in this study is that the target language in question in this research is not English. Specifically, the above-mentioned studies (i.e., Lamb, 2012; Taguchi et al., 2009 and You and Dörnyei, 2016) were conducted in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Busse's (2013) research in learners of German in the United Kingdom showed that the Ideal L2 self was only moderately correlated with intended learning effort ranged from .37 to .41. The similarity between Busse's (2013) study and the results displayed above raises a question that the strong association between the Ideal L2 self and learning effort may be language specific, or more precisely, specific to English. Since English has received most of attention in motivation research in the past ten years (see Boo et al., 2015), more research is needed if this question is to be answered.

#### 4.5 Gender difference in various aspects of motivation and intended effort

Previous literature has consistently found that male learners have lower motivation than their female counterparts (e.g., Öztürk and Gürbüz, 2013), hold a less positive attitude toward English (Kobayashi, 2002) and tend to have weaker L2 self-concepts over time (Henry, 2009). As these studies were mainly conducted with teenagers in the EFL context, this study investigated if the same phenomenon appeared in adult learners of Chinese.

##### 4.5.1 Ratings

Table 7 displays the means, standard deviations of each construct broken down by gender. It also tabulates the  $t$ -values and  $p$ -values of independent tests that examined if there was genuine difference between male and female learners in the study. The  $t$ -values and  $p$ -values were adjusted if the assumption of equal variance was not met.

**Table 7 The motivational ratings of different constructs broken down by gender**

Constructs	Means		<i>t</i> -values	<i>p</i> -values
	Males (n = 53)	Females (n = 39)		
Attitude toward immediate learning experience	5.90 (SD = 0.91)	5.69 (SD = 1.13)	0.96	0.34
Attitude toward L2 community	5.51 (SD = 0.85)	5.37 (SD = 1.27)	0.65	0.52
Intrinsic motivation	5.43 (SD = 0.79)	5.59 (SD = 1.04)	-0.83	0.41
Instrumentality (Promotion)	5.30 (SD = 1.07)	5.52 (SD = 1.23)	-0.924	0.37
Ideal L2 self	5.24 (SD = 0.86)	5.01 (SD = 1.19)	1.02	0.31
Cultural interest	5.03 (SD = 0.87)	4.78 (SD = 1.26)	1.00	0.30
Linguistic Confidence	4.21 (SD = 0.96)	4.09 (SD = 1.10)	0.53	0.60
Ought to L2 self	3.46 (SD = 1.53)	2.84 (SD = 1.42)	1.99	0.05
Intended effort	4.70 (SD = 1.07)	4.59 (SD = 1.43)	0.41	0.67

Table 7 indicates that the gender differences found among the motivational factors in this study were not statistically significant. Although table 8 demonstrated that the female learners were more motivated by cultural interest  $r = .67, p < 0.01$  than the male learners,  $r = .47, p < 0.01$  (see the first column), it did not result in a difference in their intended effort, as indicated in table 4.5 (the last row in the table). This finding is a stark contrast to previous literature, where males were consistently found to be less motivated and less willing to make effort to learn a foreign language. This contrast might arise from the fact that the learners were all adults, who are rarely on SLA researchers' radar.

**Table 8 Correlation matrix for all scale variables in this study broken down by gender**

		Intended effort	Attitude toward L2 community	Intrinsic motivation	Cultural Interest	instrumental	Ideal L2 self	Linguistic confidence	Ought_to_L2	Attitude toward learning experience
Intended effort	Male	1.00								
	Female	1.00								
Attitude toward L2 communities	Male	.45**	1.00							
	Female	.58**	1.00							
Intrinsic motivation	Male	.51**	.53**	1.00						
	Female	.50**	.69**	1.00						
Cultural interest	Male	.47**	.65**	.60**	1.00					
	Female	.67**	.76**	.66**	1.00					
instrumental	Male	.18	.54**	.40**	.35*	1.00				
	Female	.29	.38**	.40*	.20	1.00				
Ideal L2 self	Male	.44**	.50**	.39**	.38**	.51**	1.00			
	Female	.46**	.60**	.68**	.63**	.49**	1.00			
Linguistic confidence	Male	.26	-.03	.32*	.01	.03	.24	1.00		
	Female	.37	.07	.24	.18	.23	.52**	1.00		
Ought_to_L2	Male	.17	.30*	.11	.31*	.20	.15	-.17	1.00	
	Female	.07	.05	.04	.09	.36*	.12	.03	1.00	
Attitude to learning experience	Male	.34*	.42**	.41**	.34*	.33*	.22	.23	-.16	1.00
	Female	.12	.39**	.39*	.17	.16	.17	-.06	.86	1.00

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

In particular, Ryan and Dörnyei (2013) observed that “Much of the L2 motivation literature focuses on young people learning language.....there is very often an underlying assumption that the ‘language learner’ in question is a young person in formal education”.

Furthermore, learning environment could have been another reason that led to this finding. Henry (2009) argued that the imbalanced number of male language teachers might have caused weaker L2 specific self-concepts in male learners, Clark and Trafford (1995) suggested that teachers’ personalities and classroom practice play an important role in boys being out performed in modern languages. As adult learners often have better control of their learning environment (Ryan and Dörnyei, 2013), the freedom they enjoy in their adulthood may allow them to choose the learning environment they like so that the gender difference is narrowed in a less formal setting. In the case of this study, the language teachers in a third level education setting and evening class setting could be greatly different from that in the high school setting, which narrow the gender difference caused by the immediate learning environment. As it is shown in table 7, both male ( $M = 5.9, SD = 0.91, N = 53$ ) and female ( $M = 5.69, SD = 1.13, N = 39$ ) learners in the study were satisfied with their immediate learning environment. An independent samples *t*-test also confirmed that there was no significant difference between the two group in their satisfaction of their learning environment,  $t(90) = 0.96, p = 0.34$ .

#### **4.5.2 Summary**

This section examines the group differences in the nine motivational factors and the criterion measured in this study, in terms of gender. Although previous studies have consistently found that female learners were more motivated (e.g., Clark and Trafford, 1995) and had a higher degree of the Ideal L2 self (Henry, 2009), this study did not find the same result. One of the possible explanations of this result is that age of the participants in this study. As this study’s participants were all adults, so that the patterns found in previous research, which was often conducted in the context of secondary-level education, may not apply to the context of the current study. In particular, Clark and Trafford (1995) and Henry (2009) argued that the language teaching and learning environment in high-schools were often biased against male learners. Unlike high school students, adults often have a greater control of their learning environments. While students’ motivation is more susceptible to gender-biased learning environment, adults often have the capacity to express their opinions to course providers should any causes of dissatisfaction happen.

#### **4.6. Do learners of different proficiency levels have different attitudes and self-concepts**

You and Dörnyei (2016) found that advanced learners tended to have a stronger ideal L2 self. Previous study showed that more advanced learners had a higher level of instrumentality (e.g.,

Dörnyei, 1990) and integrativeness (e.g., Yu and Witkins, 2008). This part of the study discusses if learners at a more advanced level would have a stronger Ideal L2 self and Instrumentality in the context of learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language.

#### **4.6.1 The participants' proficiency level in relation to the attitudinal variables**

Four attitude-related motivational factors were presented in table 9 by the three proficiency levels reported by the participants in this study, namely beginner, post-beginner and intermediate. Their ratings on these attitudinal factors were compared and analysed using One-way ANOVAs.

Normality checks were carried out on the residuals which were approximately normally distributed. However, since the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated in Instrumentality-promotion, adjusted Welch's  $F$  was used,  $F(2, 46.79) = 5.05, p = 0.008$ , the estimated omega squared ( $\omega^2 = 0.11$ ) indicated that 11% of the variation in the perception of the utilitarian value of Chinese is attributable to proficiency level.

*Post hoc* comparisons, using the Games Howell *post hoc* procedure (since variances of the three groups are unequal), were conducted and found that intermediate learners ( $M = 5.93, SD = 0.71, N = 23$ ) perceived Chinese more positively than the post-beginners ( $M = 4.90, SD = 1.23, N = 21$ ) and the beginners ( $M = 5.35, SD = 1.37, N = 48$ ) in terms of Instrumentality-promotion. This finding is consistent with the findings in Dörnyei's (1990) quantitative study which found intermediate learners had a higher level of instrumental motivation.

Another aspect that the intermediate learners rated significantly higher than the other two groups was Attitude toward L2 community. Since the assumption of homogeneity of variance is violated, Welch's adjusted  $F$  was used,  $F(2, 49.16) = 5.81, p = 0.005$ . The estimated omega squared ( $\omega^2 = 0.08$ ) indicated that 8% of the variation in Attitude toward L2 community is attributable to proficiency level.

The Games Howell procedure (since variances of the three groups are unequal) was also used to conduct *post hoc* comparisons, which indicated that the intermediate learners ( $M = 5.96, SD = 0.77$ ) had a more positive attitude toward Chinese speaking communities than the other two groups. This finding is consistent with Gardner's (2001) assumption that one would not be able to master a second/foreign language without having a sufficiently positive attitude toward the communities where their target language is spoken. Moreover, this finding is also consistent with theories such as Willingness to Communicate (MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clément and Noels, 1998) and L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2009) in which attitude toward L2 communities often played an important role in learning effort and proficiency.



Cultural interest was also found to be rated significantly higher by the intermediate learners than the other two groups,  $F(2, 89) = 5.05, p > 0.008$ . The estimated omega squared ( $\omega^2 = 0.08$ ) indicated that 8% of the variation in Cultural interest is attributable to proficiency level. *Post hoc* comparisons (Tukey HSD) found that intermediate learners ( $M = 5.66, SD = 0.70$ ) were more interested in Chinese culture than the other two groups. The open-ended question in the questionnaire survey indicates that the participants' learning journey often started with their interested in Chinese culture. The higher level of interested culture found in the intermediate learners might have arisen from the learners' higher ability to engage in more Chinese-culture-related-activities, which reinforced their passion for the culture.

**Table 9 The participants' ratings on attitude-related variables broken by proficiency level**

Construct	Means			F-values	p-values	Post-hoc comparison***	Effect size (omega squared $\omega^2$ )
	Beginners (N = 48)	Post-beginners (N = 21)	Intermediates (N = 23)				
Attitude toward immediate learning experience	5.88 (SD = 0.93)	5.71 (SD = 1.01)	5.76 (SD = 1.20)	0.218	0.80	N/A	N/A
Attitude toward L2 community	5.18 (SD = 1.13)	5.51 (SD = 0.92)	5.96 (SD = 0.77)	5.81	0.005**	Intermediates > Post-beginner = Beginners	0.08
Instrumentality (Promotion)	5.35 (SD = 1.17)	4.90 (SD = 1.23)	5.93 (SD = 0.71)	5.05	0.008**	Intermediates > Post-beginner = Beginners	0.11
Cultural interest	4.61 (SD = 1.12)	4.84 (SD = 1.07)	5.66 (SD = 0.70)	8.28	0.001**	Intermediates > Post-beginner = Beginners	0.08

Notes: \*\*\* *Post hoc* Tukey's HSD comparison used if the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met, Games-Howell procedure used if the assumption was not met. "N/A" is used to denote there is no need to proceed with *post hoc* comparison as *p*-value is over 0.05.

\*\**p*-value is smaller than 0.01.

\* *p*-value is smaller than 0.05.

"=" is used to indicate non-significant differences between the values, whereas "<" or ">" denote significant differences

**Table 10** The participants' ratings on self-related concepts and Intended effort broken by proficiency level

Construct	Means			F-values	p-values	Post-hoc comparison***	Effect size (omega squared $\omega^2$ )
	Beginners (N = 48)	Post-beginners (N = 21)	Intermediates (N = 23)				
Intrinsic motivation	5.34 (SD = 1.02)	5.48 (SD = 0.72)	5.82 (SD = 0.74)	2.20	0.12	N/A	N/A
Ideal L2 self	4.76 (SD = 1.13)	5.29 (SD = 1.08)	5.81 (SD = 0.60)	10.25	0.000**	Intermediates > Post-beginner = Beginners	0.19
Linguistic Confidence	3.98 (SD = 0.96)	4.27 (SD = 1.10)	4.44 (SD = 0.92)	1.89	0.167	N/A	N/A
Ought to L2 self	3.33 (SD = 1.53)	2.90 (SD = 1.37)	3.19 (SD = 1.48)	0.568	0.569	N/A	N/A
Intended effort	4.32 (SD = 1.29)	4.64 (SD = 1.13)	5.37 (SD = 0.88)	6.27	0.003**	Intermediates > Post-beginners = Beginners	0.12

Notes: \*\*\* *Post hoc* Tukey's HSD comparison used if the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met, Games-Howell procedure used if the assumption was not met. "N/A" is used to denote there is no need to proceed with *post hoc* comparison as *p*-value is over 0.05.

\*\**p*-value is smaller than 0.01.

\* *p*-value is smaller than 0.05.

"=" is used to indicate non-significant differences between the values, whereas "<" or ">" denote significant differences

#### 4.6.2 The three proficiency groups' self-concepts

The participants' ideal L2 self, ought to L2 self, linguistic confidence, as well as intended effort by proficiency are also displayed in table 10 (see the previous page). The descriptive statistics show that the most competent group (i.e., intermediate learners) in this study had the strongest Ideal L2 ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ), whereas the least competent group (the beginners) rated the lowest on the same scale ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). This result is consistent with what was found in You and Dörnyei's (2016) study in China. Regarding Linguistic confidence, the most advanced learners had a higher confidence level ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) than the other the post-beginners ( $M = 4.27$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and the beginners ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ). The three proficiency groups showed a similar level of Ought to L2 self, with the rating from the beginners ( $M = 3.33$ ,  $SD = 1.58$ ) marginally higher than the other two groups.

To examine if the difference in the Ideal L2 self between these three levels of learners is genuine (statistical), a One-way ANOVA was performed. Normality checks were carried out on the residuals which were approximately normally distributed, yet the assumption of homogeneity of variance was violated, as indicated by the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances,  $F(2, 89) = 4.64$ ,  $p = 0.012$ . Therefore, *Welch's* adjusted  $F$  ratio was used, the test indicates that at least two of the three proficiency groups differed significantly on their Ideal L2 self scores, *Welch's*  $F(2, 50.11)$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The estimated omega squared ( $\omega^2 = 0.17$ ) indicated that 17% of the variation in the difference in Ideal L2 self could be explained by proficiency level.

*Post hoc* comparisons, Games Howell *post hoc* procedure (since variances of the three groups are unequal), were used to determine which pairs of the three proficiency levels' Ideal L2 self differed significantly. The results indicate that the participants at the intermediate level ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) had a significantly higher average score on the Ideal L2 self than the beginners ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). Nonetheless, the post-beginners' mean score on the Ideal L2 self ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) was neither significantly different from the beginners ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ) nor the intermediate learners ( $M = 5.81$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ).

A One-way ANOVA was also performed to inspect the relationship between intended effort and proficiency level. Normality checks were carried out on the residuals which were approximately normally distributed, the assumption of homogeneity of variance was also met, as indicated by the Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variances,  $F(2, 89) = 2.58$ ,  $p = 0.082$ . The test result showed that the intermediate learners were more willing to make effort to learn Chinese,  $F(2, 89) = 6.27$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . The estimated omega squared ( $\omega^2 = 0.12$ ) indicated that 12% of the variation in the difference in intended effort could be explained by proficiency level.

*Post hoc* Tukey's Honestly Significant Different (HSD) procedure was performed, which showed that the intermediate learners ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) had a higher intention of learning Chinese than the post-

beginners ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) and the beginners ( $M = 4.32$ ,  $SD = 1.29$ ). However, no significant difference was found between the beginners and the post-beginners.

However, the three proficiency groups were not significantly different in the Ought to L2 self,  $F(2, 89) = 0.568$ ,  $p = 0.57$ , and Linguistic confidence,  $F(2, 89) = 1.83$ ,  $p = 0.17$ .

#### **4.6.3 Summary**

This section has displayed the group difference among the three proficiency groups in the current study using One Way ANOVA. Compared to the post-beginners and beginners, the intermediate learners in this study were found to have more positive attitudes toward three aspects, namely Instrumentality-promotion, Attitude toward L2 communities and Cultural interest. The intermediate learners were also found to be more willing to spend their time and effort to perfect their language skills. These findings are largely consistent with previous literature. In particular, Dörnyei (1990) found that intermediate learners of English in Hungary were more instrumentally motivated compared to learners at the elementary level. This finding could be attributed to two possibilities: 1) intermediate learners began to contemplate using their language skills in future careers as they gain a higher level of proficiency; and 2) instrumentality is a strong motivator for language learners. Dörnyei (1990) suggested that the latter explanation is more likely to be the reason for this phenomenon, as the participants in his study had not yet achieved “a working knowledge of English” (1990, p.60). However, Ushioda’s (2001) study suggested that learners became more instrumentally motivated when they had more work-related experience using their target language, which supports the first explanation. Since the quantitative method used in this study cannot sufficiently explain why the intermediate learners were more instrumentally oriented, this issue will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter where qualitative methods were used.

As far as the three self-concepts are concerned, the Ideal L2 self was the only construct that was found to have significant between group difference. This finding is consistent with what was found in You and Dörnyei’s (2016) research in China, where the more advanced learners (English majors) were found to have a stronger Ideal L2 self.

The findings in this section have been largely consistent with previous literature when the participants were grouped by proficiency level. However, the analyses indicated that no significant differences were found between the males and females in the current study.

#### **4.6.4 Are learners of different levels motivated by different factors?**

Although section 4.5 has demonstrated that the intermediate learners had a more positive attitude toward the Chinese speaking communities, greater interest in Chinese culture, stronger Ideal L2 self, and a stronger instrumentality orientation, as indicated in section 4.3, these are not necessarily reflective of the effect of these motivating factors. In order to test if the learners of different proficiency levels were

motivated by different factors, Pearson correlation was performed. Since Attitude toward L2 communities and Instrumentality-promotion violated the assumption of normality (skewness  $> 1$  or  $< -1$ ) in the elementary and intermediate groups, Spearman rank order correlation ( $r_s$ ). The associations between these motivators and the learners' proficiency levels are displayed in table 11. For the sake of clarity, only the coefficients that were significantly correlated with the construct of Intended effort are displayed.

Table 11 indicates that the beginners, post-beginners and intermediate learners in the current study were motivated by different reasons. Specifically, the beginners' motivation was driven by a wide variety of factors. Among these orientations, Cultural interest  $r = .65, p < 0.01$ , Intrinsic motivation  $r = .59, p < 0.01$  and Attitude toward L2 communities  $r_s = .54, p < 0.05$  were all strongly associated with the learners' intended effort. An interesting finding is that Ought to L2 self was also moderately correlated with intended effort  $r = .32, p < .05$ , although its relationship with the criterion measure was weak compared with the other factors. On the other hand, Cultural interest  $r = .53, p < 0.01$  and Attitude toward learning environment  $r = .51, p < 0.01$  were shown to have been the motives for the post-beginners.

**Table 11 Correlation between motivating factors and intended effort broken down by proficiency levels**

Correlation coefficient between each motivating factor (first column on the left) and intended effort			
	Beginners (n = 48)	Post-beginners (n = 21)	Intermediate learners (n = 23)
Attitude toward L2 communities	$r_s = .54^*$	--	--
Cultural Interest	.65**	.53**	--
Ideal L2 self	.37**	--	.43*
Intrinsic motivation	.59**	--	--
Instrumentality-promotion	--	--	$r_s = .56^{**}$
Attitudes toward learning experience	--	.51**	--
Linguistic confidence	--	--	--
Ought to L2 self	.32*	--	--

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

$r_s$  . Spearman's rank order correlation is used as the variable(s) violated the assumption of normality

Regarding the intermediate learners, two striking features can be found in table 10. First, the Ideal L2 in the intermediate learners were the strongest among the three learner groups  $r = .43$ ,  $p < 0.05$ . Meanwhile, table 10 also indicates that the intermediate learners had a higher level of intended effort and a stronger Ideal L2 self compared to the other two proficiency groups (see section 4.5). The close relationship with the learners' proficiency level, intended effort and the Ideal L2 self in the current study shows support to Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, which proposed that Ideal L2 self is the best predictor of intended effort.

Instrumentality-promotion was also found to have been strongly associated with intended effort in this group. This finding supports Dörnyei's (1990) study that learners' linguistic competence is strongly connected with learners' instrumental motivation. Furthermore, the findings also reflect that the intermediate learners did not only have a significantly stronger Ideal L2 and are more instrumentality-oriented, but they also successfully translate them into motivators to fuel their learning.

Nonetheless, it is noted that the close relationship between the Instrumentality-promotion, Ideal L2 self and intended effort was only found in the intermediate learners. This may have been caused by two reasons. First, the learners at the two less advanced levels have not developed a strong Ideal L2 self and instrumental-orientation that could provide impetus for their learning. The second explanation is that learners at different stages are simply motivated by different factors. In particular, both beginners and non-beginners' motivation was strongly associated with Cultural interest, which may mean that educators should pay more attention to these two learner groups' development of Cultural interest, and why they were particularly motivated by this factor.

Although this study is consistent with previous studies which show that learners of different proficiency levels can differ in their ideal L2 self and motivation, using proficient level as the only predictor of learners' motivator (i.e., assuming learners of a particular proficiency group are motivated by a particular predictor variable) in this study may be problematic. It is because some of the findings using this categorisation do not match the findings using the qualitative methods of this study. For example, one of the core informants in this study, Sarah (see chapter 5), a highly motivated learner with a strong ideal L2 self, was a beginner when she took part in the questionnaire survey. Some other beginners also demonstrated a strong ideal L2 self and the link between the ideal L2 self and motivation was also noticeable during the interviews. Three reasons may have contributed to these phenomena. The first possible reason is that categorising and evaluating learners' motivation based on self-reported competency can yield inaccurate results. It is because learners who are confident tend to overestimate their proficiency level, yet low confident learners are likely to underestimate themselves. Unlike English, a language where its learners are often tested on their proficiency, far less learners of Chinese have the needs to evaluate their competency in the language. Therefore, the learners may mistakenly report their proficiency levels, which led to a statistical test result not representative of reality.

Another possible reason is that there may have been lurking variable(s) that mediated the relationships between the ideal L2 self, proficiency level and motivation (or using intended effort as an operational definition in this study), yet the lurking variables are unable to be identified using inferential statistics. The third possible reason is that there may have been some within-group difference among the learners in each of the three levels (i.e., beginners, post-beginners and intermediate learners). Staples and Biber (2015) hold that even if a significant difference is found between different subgroups (e.g., by gender, age and proficiency level), researchers are bound to find within-group variation: some members would behave differently from the norm in the subgroup they belong to. To illustrate how within-group difference, a scatter plot is generated to visualise that some beginners can be very different from the others, as illustrated in figure 7:



Figure 7: The relationship between the ideal L2 self and proficiency level

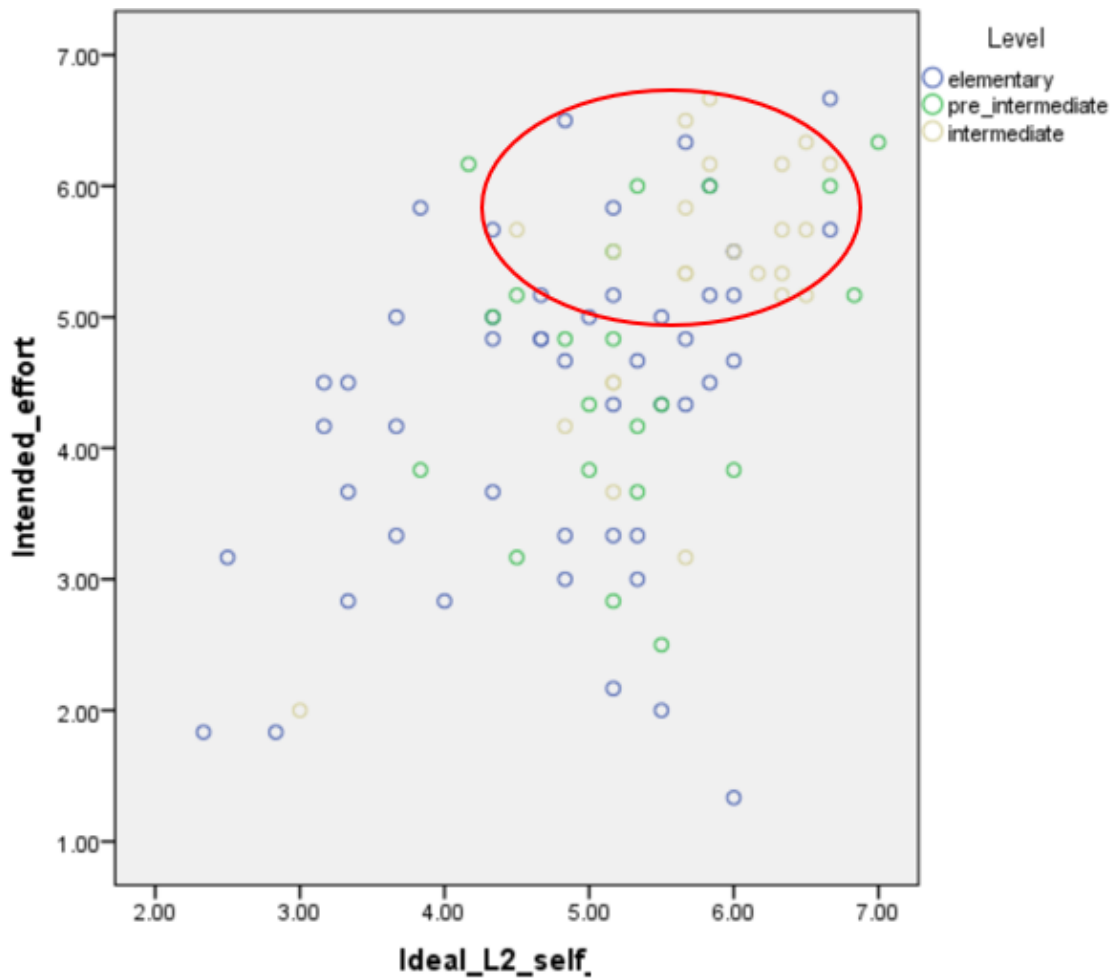


Figure 7 is a scatter plot that visualises the correlation between the ideal L2 self and intended effort, the participants' proficiency levels are colour-coded. While the inferential statistics (One Way ANOVA and Pearson Correlation) found that there is a different between the three proficiency groups, figure 7 shows that some beginners (in blue) were also motivated strongly by the ideal L2 self (circled), just like the intermediate learners. These learners' motivational profiles might have been masked by the categorisation of proficiency level but in fact they share more similarities with the intermediate group than their beginner and post-beginner counterparts. For this reason, an exploratory method is employed for further investigation.

Before proceeding to the next section, it is noted that this chapter interprets the correlations between different independent variables (e.g., Cultural interest, intrinsic motivation and the ideal L2 self) and the dependent variable (the intended effort) in causal terms only because there is a clear directionality between these variables. In particular, it is quite clear that participants' interest in Chinese culture, perceived instrumentality of the language and attitude toward Chinese speaking communities can affect learners' motivation. It is logical to infer that a learner who is deeply in love with Chinese culture will

make more effort to learn the language. However, a person who is making a great effort to learn the language will not result in the person having a greater interest in Chinese culture (although the result of making great effort: a higher proficiency level, may lead to the learner becoming more interested in the culture, but then competency will become a confounding variable, so that making effort itself will not affect the learners' perception of Chinese culture). Therefore, the correlations between different variables can only be interpreted in causal terms when the dependent variable is learners intended effort, because there is no clear directionality between the independent variables (or predictor variables) in this study. A person's positive attitude towards the speaking communities is likely to have a stronger cultural interest in the communities' culture (i.e., they are correlated with each other), but whether the positive attitude causes strong cultural interest or strong cultural interest causes the positive attitude is unclear. Thus, this study only discusses correlations in causal terms only when there is an obvious directionality between variables.

#### 4.7 An exploratory approach: using cluster analysis in this study

This section presents the procedure of an exploratory method used in the current study, cluster analysis. In section 4.6, it is shown that the intermediate learners tended to be motivated by the Ideal L2 self, whereas the beginners' intended effort was mainly driven by their interest in Chinese culture and intrinsic motivation. This section aims to answer the question if there were some beginners who were motivated by the Ideal L2 self, and some intermediate learners were driven by cultural interest using the technique of cluster analysis. Since the procedure (steps) of how a clustering solution was selected has been already detailed in section 3.7 in the preceding chapter (see 3.7.5 in the previous chapter), this section focuses on the findings of each step and how they facilitate the researcher to select the optimal number of clustering. Specifically, Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) suggest that researchers should give account of five types of information if cluster analysis is used. Hair and colleagues (2010) also reiterate the importance of reporting the sample size and the process of the selection of variables. This section will present the information about the validation of the following Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) and Hair et al.'s (2010) advice in the first half of the section. The second half of the section discusses the characteristics of the final clustering solution and how it contributes to the current study.

##### 4.7.1 Choosing an optimal clustering solution

In section 3.7, I have detailed the procedure taken in this study in order to choose an optimal clustering solution, this section presents the results of the procedure and demonstrates how the final cluster was validated.

###### *Sample size and the selection of variables*

Formann (1984) proposes that the variable-to-sample-size ratio should be defined as  $2^d \leq N$ , where  $d$  denotes the number of variables, and  $N$  represents the sample size. The number of valid questionnaires

in the current study is 92, which means the product of  $2^d$  should not be larger than 92. In other words, the suggested number of variables examined is six.

Based on the findings in the previous sections, the following six variables were selected on which cluster analysis is based, they were:

- 1) Attitude toward L2 communities
- 2) Cultural Interest, Ideal L2 self
- 3) Intrinsic motivation
- 4) Ideal L2 self
- 5) Instrumentality-promotion
- 6) Attitude toward learning experience

The first four variables were selected because they showed either medium or strong correlation with intended effort. Instrumentality-promotion (variable 5) was also selected because it has been shown an important construct in the current study, a case in point is that many participants reflected their aspiration to use Mandarin Chinese as a vehicle for career advancement in the open-ended question in the questionnaire. Furthermore, the factor was also strongly correlated with intended effort in the intermediate group, which also showcased its importance.

Although Linguistic confidence, Ought to L2 self, Attitude toward learning experience had relatively weak correlation with intended effort, Attitude toward learning experience (variable 6) was one of the two variables strongly correlated with intended effort in the post-beginner group, whereas the other two variables appear to be quite weak in terms of both ratings and correlation with the criterion measure.

#### *The final cluster and its internal validity*

Once the variables were chosen, the data were analysed using SPSS version 24. The distance between each data point was measured by Euclidean squared distance. Following the procedure reported in section 3.7.5 (steps one and two), a complete list of possible clustering solutions was generated. Then, following step three described in 3.7.5, the silhouette coefficient (a method to measure the internal validity of a clustering solution) of each possible clustering solution was calculated, as presented in table 12.

**Table 12 A complete list of possible cluster-solutions and their Average Silhouette Width (Silhouette coefficient)**

Clustering Algorithm	Average Silhouette width (Silhouette coefficient)					
	2-cluster-solution	3-cluster-solution	4-cluster-solution	5-cluster-solution	6-cluster-solution	7-cluster-solution
Ward's method	0.30	0.27	0.29	0.26	0.28	--
Average linkage (within group)	0.30	0.27	0.27	0.30	0.30	0.30
Average linkage (Between group)	0.32	0.27	0.28	0.30	0.28	--
Centroid linkage	0.32	0.29	0.28	--	--	--

Table 12 indicates the highest Silhouette coefficient (0.32) can be found in the two-cluster-solutions using Average linkage (Between group) and Centroid linkage, which means the solutions based on these two clustering methods were better than the others on the list (as the total sum of square is the smallest and the between group variation is the biggest, see section 3.7.5, step 4). Examining the two outputs, it is found that the two solutions both had 60 participants in group 1 and 32 participants in group two. These results could mean the K-means analyses based on the results of these two clustering methods yielded the same results. If it is the case, it means the clustering solution is stable, as using different methods in the analysis does not yield different results.

*The stability of the final cluster*

Hair and colleagues (2013) emphasise that different clustering methods can sometime generate different result, thus, it is important for researchers to examine if the group membership would change drastically if different methods are used. If this phenomenon should occur, it means the clustering solution was yielded due to the clustering method used, but not the similarity between the observations. To confirm the agreement between the different methods, Cohen's Kappa was performed. As it is generally agreed that the value of Cohen's Kappa should not be lower than 0.4 (indicating group membership changes drastically if a different method is used), a value of 0.7 is regarded as evidence of relatively high grouping agreement between two clusters (Finch, 2005, see section 3.5.2). The test result showed that there was a strong agreement among the partitioning methods, as the groupings produced by these four methods yielded identical results, Cohen's  $K=1$ ,  $p < 0.000$ .

The agreement between the Ward's method based analysed (two-cluster-solution, silhouette index = 0.30) and the best solution (silhouette index = 0.32) was also tested. Cohen's K revealed that there is also a relatively strong agreement between the k-means clustering based on Ward's linkage and the best solution,  $K = 0.76, p < 0.000$ . The Cohen's K testing the agreement between Ward's linkage and average linkage (within group) was also performed, and the groupings produced by these two methods yielded identical results,  $K=1, p < 0.000$ .

To summarise, of the four-algorithms-informed-K-means results (the four algorithms in the first column in table 12, Ward's method and within group average linkage-based analyses yielded the same result (Cohen's  $K = 1$ ); centroid linkage and between group average linkage also had the same result (Cohen's  $K = 1$ ). The agreement between the four-algorithms-informed-K-means results was also high ( $K = 0.76, p < 0.000$ ). This also means that the cluster membership of the participants is stable, as a change of clustering method was unlikely to change the clustering result.

#### **4.7.2 Summarising the clustering procedure**

In the beginning of this section, I mentioned that Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) advised researchers to report five types of information while using cluster analysis, namely computer programme, the (dis)similarity measure, cluster method, the procedure used to determine the number of clusters, as well as evidence of the validity of the clusters. Hair and colleagues (2013) suggest that researchers should report the sample size as well as clustering variables. The information is presented in table 13.

**Table 13 Seven types of information that researchers should report on using cluster analysis (based on the advice of Aldenderfer and Blashfield (1984) and Hair and colleagues (2013))**

<b>Computer programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SPSS version 24</li> </ul>
<b>The (dis)similarity measure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Euclidean squared distance</li> </ul>
<b>Cluster method</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hierarchical cluster analysis: Four methods were conducted: Ward's method, centroid linkage, average linkage (further divided into within group and between groups).</li> <li>• Based on the results of the Hierarchical clustering, K-means clustering was conducted several times.</li> </ul>
<b>The procedure used to determine the number of clusters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the Dendrograms and scree-plots generated based on the outputs using the four algorithms (see above, cluster method) in hierarchical analysis to decide the possible number of clusters of different clustering methods. A complete list of possible number of clusters is created. The evaluation/validation process (see below) will then be used to select and validate the final cluster solution</li> </ul>
<b>Evidence of the validity of the clusters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal evaluation: Silhouette coefficient, also known as Average Silhouette Width.</li> <li>• Relative evaluation: Compared the results of K-means clustering, and use Cohen's Kappa to confirm the stability of the final cluster</li> <li>• External evaluation: Use the criterion measure of the current study, intended effort, to examine if the findings match the previous literature.</li> </ul>
<b>Sample size</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 92</li> </ul>
<b>Selection of variables (for clustering)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on Formann's (1984) advice, the maximum number of variables can be used is six, they are as follows: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Attitude toward L2 communities</li> <li>2) Cultural Interest, Ideal L2 self</li> <li>3) Intrinsic motivation</li> <li>4) Ideal L2 self</li> <li>5) Instrumentality-promotion</li> <li>6) Attitude toward learning experience</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

#### 4.8 The characteristics of the final clustering (External validity)

At the beginning of section 4.7, it is noted that one of the purposes of using cluster analysis is to identify special structures and cases that have not been recognised in the previous analyses. In this section, I will first outline some characteristics of the two clusters yielded in cluster analysis. I will also compare if the two groups of learners were different in their level of intended effort and the motivational factors that contributed to the difference if it was found. At the end of this section, I will also demonstrate the clustering membership in relation to the members' proficiency level in order to test if cluster analysis could contribute to uncovering some hidden features in the dataset.

##### 4.8.1 The characteristics of the two groups and their intended effort

After the final clustering was selected, some characteristics of the final clustering were examined. The motivational profiles of the two groups in the final clustering were also compared with the findings in the previous sections in this chapter.

**Table 14 The two groups' means scores on the six variables clustered**

Variables	Group 1 (n = 60)	SD	Group 2 (n =32)	SD	T	P -value (2-tailed)	Effect size (r)
Attitude toward L2 communities	6.02	0.54	4.39	.94	5.16	0.00**	.49
Cultural interest	5.42	0.81	3.99	.98	4.95	0.00**	.46
Ideal L2 self	5.61	0.72	4.28	.92	6.92	0.00**	.59
Attitude toward learning experience	6.05	0.92	5.36	1.03	0.15	0.88	N/A
Intrinsic motivation	5.89	0.67	4.76	.83	2.37	0.06	N/A
Instrumentality- promotion	5.83	0.79	4.58	1.24	2.17	0.08	N/A
Intended effort	5.05	1.06	3.93	1.22	4.59	0.00**	.44

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

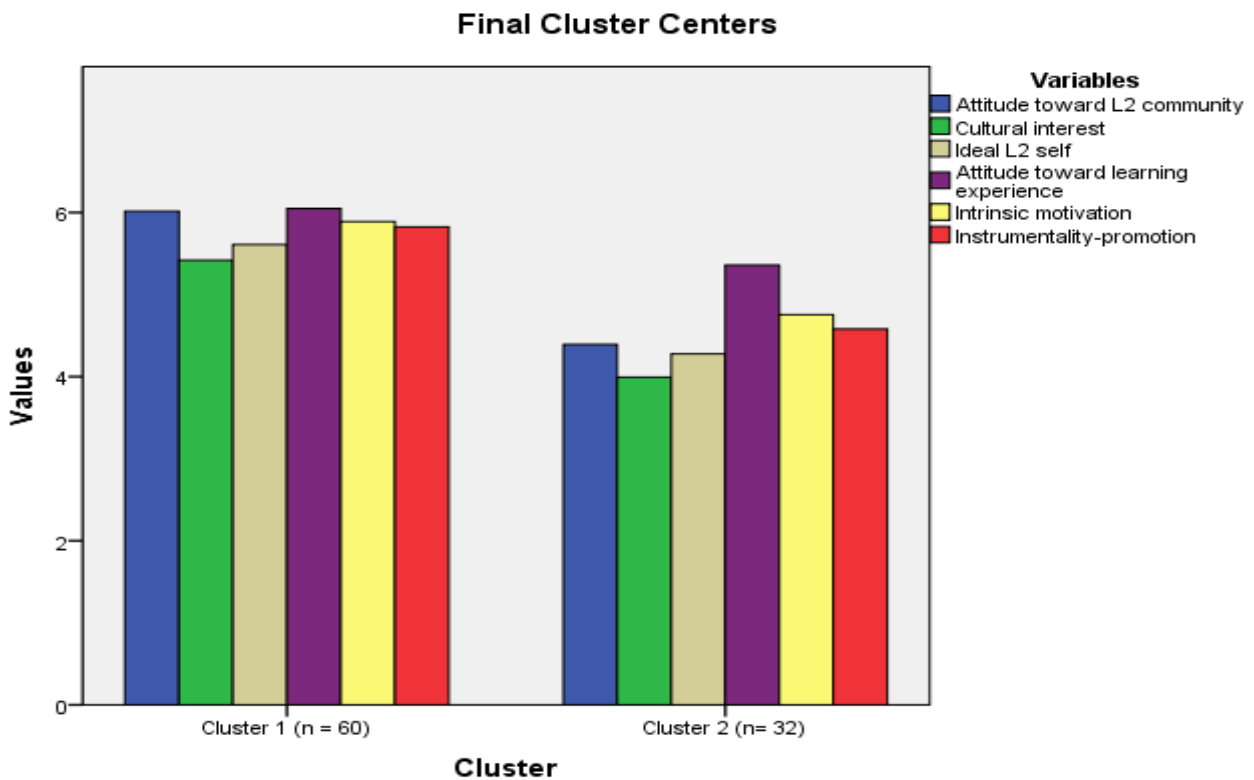
\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 14 summaries the two groups of participants' mean scores on the six variables clustered, which are also visualised in figure 8. Group one has 60 participants and group two has 32 participants. The figures in table 14 show that the participants in group one had very positive attitudes toward their immediate learning environment (M=6.05, SD = 0.92) and Chinese speaking communities (M=6.02, SD = 0.54), yet the participants' ratings on the Ideal L2 self (M = 5.61, SD = 0.72) and Cultural interest (M

= 5.42, SD = 0.81) were not as high. Group two had a relatively positive attitude toward their learning experience (M = 5.36, SD = 1.03). However, group two's ratings on the other five scales appear to be quite low, as none of them exceeded 5.00 (out of 7) in their means scores.

Although the bar-plot illustrates that group one had much higher scores on nearly all motivational factors compared with group two, only some of the differences are statistically significant. The results of the two samples independent *t*-tests that compared the means scores of the two groups in table 14 indicated that group one only had significantly higher scores on Attitude toward the L2 communities,  $t(90) = 5.16, p < 0.00$ , cultural interest  $t(90) = 4.95, p < 0.00$  and the Ideal L2 self  $t(90) = 6.92, p < 0.00$ . The *t*-test also indicates that group one (M = 5.05, SD = 1.06) tended to spend more time and effort on their Mandarin Chinese learning than group two (M = 3.93, SD = 1.22), as the two samples independent *t*-test shows that there is a significant difference between their mean scores on Intended effort  $t(90) = 4.95, p < 0.00$

**Figure 8 The two clusters' motivational profile**



#### 4.8.2 The motivators of the two groups

Sections 4.6 have reported that the intermediate learners had a stronger Ideal L2 self and Intended effort compared to the two less advanced groups. It also reported that the Ideal L2 self and instrumentality-promotion were the prime motivators for the intermediate learners in the study, whereas Cultural interest



was the most important driving force for both beginners and post-beginners (see table 11). In this section, we will look at if group one or group two share any of these features.

To answer this question, a Pearson correlation between intended effort and the six variables were performed group by group, for the interest of clarity, the correlation coefficients of the two groups are summarised in table 15. The figures indicated that group one was only motivated by two factors, the Ideal L2 self,  $r=0.47, p=0.001$  and cultural interest,  $r=0.29, p=0.026$ . As far as group two is concerned, the correlation coefficients indicate that the learners' motivation was strongly correlated with Cultural interest,  $r=0.66, p<0.000$ , followed by their Attitude toward L2 communities,  $r=0.54, p=0.001$ , and Intrinsic motivation,  $r=0.50, p<0.00$ .

**Table 15 Correlation matrix of motivation factors for group one and group 2**

Variables	Group 1	Group 2
Intended effort	1	1
Attitude toward L2 community	.109	.54**
Cultural Interest	.288*	.66**
Ideal L2 self	.427**	.045
Attitude to learning experience	.203	.030
Intrinsic motivation	.130	.50**
Instrumentality (promotion)	.036	-.03

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

One striking feature of the two groups' correlation coefficients is that group one was very similar to the that of the intermediate learners, where the Ideal L2 self was found to have played a crucial role in the participants (compare with Table 11). Another feature that stands out is that both group two and the beginners were strongly motivated by Cultural interest and Intrinsic motivation.

#### **4.8.3 Explaining the disparities between the inferential statistics and the cluster analysis.**

Despite the similarity between the results yielded by inferential statistics and cluster analysis, there are dissimilarities between the results yielded by the two techniques. It is obvious that group one (the group whose motivational profile looks similar to the intermediate group,  $n=60$ ) is much bigger than then the intermediate group ( $n=23$ ). In other words, half of the beginners/post-beginners appear in group one, a group primarily motivated by the ideal L2 self. This result is quite different from that of yielded by

inferential statistics. This may imply that the association between the motivator (the ideal L2 self) and the proficiency group *per se* is not strong enough to establish an argument that the ideal L2 self is a strong motivator in the intermediate group, because more than half of the beginners and post-beginners in this study also belong to group one. In other words, there might have been large within group difference among the beginners and post-beginners. The number of beginners and post-beginners in group one suggests that the beginners/post-beginners in group one and two might have been from two different populations. Thus, further investigation is needed to identify the factors that set the beginners and post-beginners in group one and group two apart. One possibility is to break down group one and group two into more sub-groups and run a Two-Way ANOVA (or even a Factorial ANOVA). However, the small sample size of this study will render the test results questionable because it is highly likely that each subgroup will have very few group members.

Besides the technicality, the categorisation of the learners into different subgroups can be quite problematic if it is done without the guidance of literature. In particular, this study has compared learners' motivational profiles using inferential statistics based on their gender and proficiency. The researcher decided to use these two categorisations because the relationships between these two factors and intended effort have been quite well-established in the literature. While the participants can be categorised into more groups such as age, length of study and whether or not they had been to China, these categorisations can be rather arbitrary. In fact, the goal of many motivation studies in SLA is to find out or validate a one-size-fit-all theoretical model, so that the motivational differences among different demographic groups and social backgrounds have hardly been the foci of motivation research. For this reason, even if significant associations could be found (e.g., the effect of length of study and proficiency level on intended effort) based on the data of this study, whether these associations exist at the population level is questionable as they are not based on solid theoretical ground. While these 39 beginners and post-beginners in group one can be analysed qualitatively, the workload involved can take another PhD project. For these difficulties, statistical analyses will stop by the end of this chapter.

Having said that, it does not mean the cluster analysis does not have any contribution. One contribution of the cluster analysis has made is that it statistically demonstrated learners with similar demographic backgrounds are not necessarily motivated by the same factor(s), as indicated by the different group memberships of the beginners and post-beginners in the current study. The test results also challenge the notion that there is a best predictor variable for some seemingly homogeneous learner groups. Thus, more attention should be given to the examination of within-group differences and the contextual factors that contribute to such differences.

If some beginners and post-beginners were found to have been motivated by the same motivator as the intermediate learners, one possible follow-up question to ask is if all intermediate learners were Ideal-L2-self-motivated? To answer this question, a cross-tab was generated (table 16). The crosstab indicates

that 27 beginners and 12 post-beginners belonged to group one (Ideal-L2-self-motivated), which support the assumption that some of the beginners and post-beginners were also Ideal-L2-self-motivated, but their motivational feature was not recognized using one way ANOVA, see above (table 9). Regarding the intermediate learners, although most intermediate learners (21 out of 23) were found to be in group 1 (Ideal-L2-self-motivated), two of intermediate participants were found in group two, where Cultural interest and intrinsic motivation played the most important role in their motivation.

**Table 16 Group membership of the final cluster in relation to proficiency level**

Cluster/group	Proficiency level			Total
	Beginners (n = 48)	Post-beginners (n = 21)	Intermediate (n = 23)	
Group 1 (n = 60)	27	12	21	60
Group 2 (n = 32)	21	9	2	32
<b>Total</b>	48	21	23	92

The crosstab shows that two intermediate learners were not motivated by the ideal L2 self. Since a large number of beginners and post-beginners were clustered into the group (whose motivational profile is very different from group two), it is reasonable to assume the beginners and post-beginners in group one and those in group two might have been from two populations. However, as the majority of the intermediate learners were clustered into group one, the two intermediate learners can be seen as exceptions. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this study is not able to delve deeper into the beginners and post-beginners in group one because the resources to conduct a large scale qualitative study and a big-enough sample size for a more fine grained statistical approach (e.g., Two-Way ANOVA or factorial ANOVA) are lacking. Nonetheless, the small number of intermediate learners in group two (they can be seen as exceptions rather than from a different population for the number/proportion is small) makes the cases suitable for further investigation qualitatively. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will compare one of the intermediate learners in group two with two other intermediate learners in group one.

To summarise, the cluster analysis in this study found that the two groups' motivation profiles, in terms of the Ideal L2 self, intended effort and motivators (correlation coefficients), mirror that of the intermediate learners (similar to group one) and the beginners (similar to group two) in the study. However, when the group membership between the two-cluster-solution and the proficiency levels were compared, some discrepancies were revealed, as some beginners and post-beginners were motivated by the Ideal L2 self, who were not recognised using one way ANOVA. Similarly, two intermediate learners'

learning were driven by the Cultural interest and Intrinsic motivation, who was also not identified by one-way ANOVA.

The different results yielded by the inferential statistics and the cluster analysis can mean some within-group difference is “lost” or “hidden” when the participants were grouped together by the researcher artificially prior to data analysis. The cluster analysis served to uncover the within-group difference and suggests that the learners of the same level might have been from two different population. Despite the contribution of using cluster analysis in this study, it remains inconclusive if cluster analysis is a better tool over inferential statistics. It is primarily due to the fact that the relationship between proficiency level and motivation (and different motivational factors) have been well documented and time-tested, but cluster analysis has thus far rarely used in SLA motivation studies. Moreover, these two types of techniques, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, have never been used in the same study in a study similar to this project. Therefore, while the difference between beginners and post-beginners from group one and group two has been shown statistically (by the fact that they belong to two clusters), what sets them apart is, unfortunately, an unanswerable question in this study because further statistical investigation does not seem to be possible and reasonable in the context of the current study.

#### 4.9 Chapter summary

In this chapter, I have reported the inquiries into the learners of Mandarin Chinese’s reasons for learning Chinese and the driving forces for their learning. This major finding of this chapter is that while instrumental value may be the main reason for learners of Chinese to pick up the language, it is the Ideal L2 self and Cultural interest (also intrinsic motivation, but to a lesser extent) that provide impetus for their learning.

Section 4.1 showed that the learners attended a course in Mandarin Chinese mainly for their interest in Chinese culture and the perceived instrumental value of the language. After reporting the research instrument’s (i.e., the questionnaire) reliability, some more focusing analyses were performed. A striking feature of these analyses is that Cultural interest was found to be an important motivator at all stage of analysis (and also intrinsic motivation, but to a lesser extent). Cultural interest had a strong positive correlation with intended effort when the 92 participants were examined as a single group, the construct’s strong correlation with intended effort remained when the participants were inquired separately by their gender. When the participants were broken down by proficiency level, Cultural interest was found to be the prime motivator of the beginners in the study, the same phenomenon also occurred when the data set was analysed by a data driven approach.

Nonetheless, the groups that were mainly driven by Cultural interest were found to be less motivated compared with groups that were motivated by the Ideal L2 self. Although the Ideal L2 self did not seem to have a strong position in the learners’ motivation when they were analysed in aggregate, it is found

that the Ideal L2 self was strongly correlated with intended effort of the intermediate learners (the most advanced learner group in the study). Similar results were also found using cluster analysis: in the two-cluster solution, one group of learners was mainly motivated by Cultural interest and intrinsic motivation, whereas the other group was motivated by the Ideal L2 self. These findings provide strong evidence that the Ideal L2 self is crucial to second/foreign language motivation, not only in the EFL context, but in the context of learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language.

This chapter also found an interesting result regarding learners' proficiency and their motivational profiles using cluster analysis. While the hypothesis that the ideal L2 self was a strong motivator for the intermediate learners was supported by the cluster analysis, the cluster analysis also revealed that not all intermediate learners in the study were Ideal-L2-self-oriented, as two intermediate learners were assigned to a group that was mainly motivated by their interest in Chinese culture and intrinsic motivation. Similarly, some beginners were also assigned to a group where the Ideal L2 self was the most important driving force. This raises that question if proficiency level is a good enough explanatory variable to explain the motivational profiles of learners of Chinese?

## Chapter 5: Findings of the longitudinal case studies

### 5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was found that two intermediate learners were found to be motivated differently from the majority of the learners of the same proficiency level. Meanwhile, some beginners and post-beginners, whose motivation was assumed to have been mainly driven by cultural interest and intrinsic motivation based on inferential statistics (One Way ANOVA), were found to have strong Ideal-L2-self-guided motivation using cluster analysis. In this part of the study, I will present the findings of a longitudinal case study in order to explain why some learners in the study have successfully developed an Ideal L2 self that provided impetus for their learning, whereas some learners, despite their commitment to the learning, still struggled to develop their ideal L2 self.

At the end of chapter two (2.5 and 2.6), I have outlined the theoretical frameworks employed for the analysis of the qualitative data (the narrative of the history of three learners of Mandarin Chinese.) in this part of the study. Specifically, I integrate Wenger's Communities of practice (1998); Bourdieu's concept of capital (1986); and Markus and Nurius's *possible selves* (1986) to analyse the narrative of the three focal participants' learning history.

The three theories adopted in the study serve three functions that are distinct yet connected, Wenger's Communities of Practice was used to understand the learners' initiatives and their participation in the communities of practice. Bourdieu's concept of capital served to examine the types and amount of resources that the learners mobilised in order to open up the opportunities to participate in the communities. As far as Possible Selves is concerned, I will examine how the participants perceive their experience and in what way their experience would affect their motivation through the lens of possible selves.

Since the development of the participants' Ideal L2 selves and change in motivation are conceptualised in this study as a continuous interplay between their participation in their communities of practice, the capital they possessed and their possible selves, the participants' narratives are analysed one by one in this chapter, and a summary section in the end of this chapter will discuss the findings in relation to the research questions. Therefore, Sarah, Tim and Alba's analyses will be reported on in section 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 respectively, and section 5.5 is the discussion section of this chapter. In the next section (section 5.2), I am going to describe the communities of practice of the participants to set the scene for the analyses.

## 5.2 Using the data

The following section will involve some direct quotation from the narratives the focal participants.

Data is labelled according to its source. The line numbers showed at the end of each excerpt match the exact locations within the transcripts (see appendices 2 to 11). The Alphabets and the attached number denotes the initials of each interviewee's pseudonym and the number of the interview respectively. For example, (A1: 34-37) represent interviewee Alba's first interview, and the excerpt can be found in the transcript from line number 34 to 37. It is noted that the interview data was transcribed using the Jefferson transcription system (Jefferson, 2004) in order to faithfully reflect the meanings conveyed by the interviewees. For example, underlined items were those emphasised by the interviewees, a symbol like (.) denotes a short pause. A complete list of the symbols used in the current study can be found in appendix 12.

## 5.2 The learners' communities of practice

Wenger (1998) holds that an individual is likely to have more than one community of practice and identity, and it applies to the three participants in the study. The three participants all had two communities of practice, one is more tangible, of which they are already a member, and another one is less tangible, and they were not yet a member of that community of practice. The second community of practice can be understood in terms of Norton's concept of *imagined community*<sup>7</sup> (2001), which was defined by Pavlenko and Norton as "a way to appropriate meanings and create new identities.....reflects the desire of learners to expand their range of identities and to reach out to wider worlds" (Pavlenko and Norton, 2007, p.590). The common community of practice of these three participants is the Chinese speaking community, where they were located in the peripheral region (although to a different degree, based on their proficiency level) of the community trying to acquire full participation (mastery) in the community.

Although their second community of practice is vastly different from one another, they were all closely associated with the first one, as gaining a full participation in the first community of practice is seen by all the participants as a gateway to the second one. For example, Tim would like to work in a multinational company with a branch in China, which is a community of practice of which he has not gained a membership yet. He was hoping to obtain the membership of this imagined community by moving into the central region of the first community (the mastery of the Chinese language).

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<sup>7</sup> Please note that both Norton (2001) and Wenger (1998) draw on Anderson's (1991) concept of imagined community. However, Norton's use of this term is closely related to language learners' hope and aspiration, whereas Wenger's definition of it is closer to Anderson's original meaning, which has very little to do with one's personal plan: you identify yourself with the members of the same country as an ingroup (in Wenger's case, the members of the same community of practice), yet because you do not know them, so your identification with these members is an imagined one. For the sake of clarity, I will use "imagination" to denote Wenger's concept and "imagined community" to represent Norton's concept.

Sarah had a clear goal and imagined community, just as Tim did, but her second community of practice was a “semi-imagined” one. Although she would like to become an artist (art manager/curator) in a museum specialising in Asian art and she had not become one yet at the time of the study, she did work in a museum in London as an art manager before studying in UI. Moreover, she also worked in a museum in UI on a casual basis. Thus, her second community of practice did not entirely only exist in her imagination. Unlike Tim and Sarah, the third participant of this part of the research, Alba, only had a vague sense of imagined community, as she told the interviewer (the researcher) in the second interview, she would like to be

Excerpt 1:

I would like to do something that helps to connect Ireland and China more.

(A2: 13)

However, her Ideal L2 self seems to be greatly different in the three interviews (will discuss in more depth in 5.5). The only thing in common in the three interviews is that Alba had a strong desire for the mastery of the language, and she is also certain about she would like to develop her career using the language. If the content of excerpt 1, 2, and 3 (see below) appear together repeatedly in all of the three interviews, one could comfortably say that Alba had an Ideal L2 self, which is defined as the representation of one’s wish, hope and attributes that one would have in the future ideally (Higgins, 1987).

Excerpt 2:

But I AM NOT GOING TO ACCEPT THAT I AM NOT IMPROVING. (A1: 141)

Excerpt 3:

Because I need to find a job £, I am not learning the language just for its own sake.

(A2: 198)

Unfortunately, Alba’s Ideal L2 self disappeared in the third interview, and the depiction of it in the first and second interviews are also different. In other words, although Alba exhibited some characteristics of Ideal L2 self, they are quite weak and volatile compared to those of Sarah and Tim. Moreover, her motivational profile was also inconsistent with what was found in You and Dörnyei’s (2016) study, which suggests that more advanced learners and the majors of the target language (Alba was both) tend to have a stronger Ideal L2 self. These findings from both quantitative and qualitative data make Alba a very interesting participant in this study.

Based on the account of the three learners, as well the interview data of their Chinese instructor in UI, they all made some improvement over their master’s degree programme. These phenomena raise two questions: first, why did Alba struggle to develop her Ideal L2 self, yet Tim and Sarah managed to do so. Second, if the Ideal L2 self did not act as a motivator, what had been keeping Alba going during her



time in UI? The following few sections will discuss these questions by displaying the participants' participation in their communities of practice, in terms of engagement, imagination and alignment, the capital form and amount of capital that the participants mobilised, and the effect of these on the evaluation of their Ideal L2 self using the theory of Possible Selves.

### 5.3 Sarah: a motivated learner with strong Ideal L2 selves

#### 5.3.1 Sarah's learning history and her Ideal L2 self

Sarah studied Fine Arts Management in a university in Ireland. She became interested in the Chinese language after she made friend with a Singaporean in 2009. Sarah was particularly impressed with the Chinese character “囍”, (this character means happiness, often used at celebratory events such as weddings). She told the researcher that she liked the symmetry of it. After she graduated from college in late 2010, she took two courses in Mandarin Chinese at a Confucius Institute in Ireland. In the beginning, she was mainly motivated by her love of Chinese culture:

#### EXCERPT 4:

I was interested in the characters, and the formation of the characters. So, >from the aesthetic point of view<, I became interested in Chinese, so I started learning it when I finished college. I think it is a beautiful language, especially the traditional characters  
(S1: 124-127).

Unlike many textbooks on the Chinese language where culture is often portrayed as food, language, film and music, Chinese culture to Sarah was always political. While studying in UI, Sarah and her classmates were asked to choose a Chinese name. She combined her surname phonetically with the name of a Chinese artist, Ai WeiWei (a Chinese contemporary artist and activist, he was placed under house arrest and then jailed for his criticism on the Chinese government), to be her Chinese name. Asked why she loved Chinese art, she replied:

#### EXCERPT 5:

Because Chinese art, contemporary Chinese artists are operating under extreme duress from the Chinese Communist Party. A lot of them are talking about subjects which they are not allowed to speak of, as a result, I think this forces them to be more creative and make their work very interesting, in a political context, because all art is political  
(S2: 180-184)

Excerpt 5 shows Sarah's feeling about Chinese arts after she worked as an art manager in a gallery in London in 2014. Although Sarah learned some knowledge about Asian arts in college, it is during her time in London that gave her the opportunities to explore more about the subject. Upon going back to Ireland, she decided to apply for a position in a museum that specialises in Asian arts. As her application was not accepted, she decided to study in UI in the hope that her chance would be heightened should

similar opportunities come up. In the interview, she expressed her strong desire to use the Chinese language in her job.

Excerpt 6:

I worked previously as a manager of an art gallery (2014 in London). But I am not able to find the same work in Ireland, in the future I would like to do something about Chinese art, so I would like to be able to talk to people about Chinese art, in Chinese!  
(S1: 47-49)

This future image of herself, being able to talk about Chinese art in Chinese in a professional setting, can be understood as her ideal L2 self, and the museum specialising in Asian arts (henceforth, Asian Art Museum, or AAM, a pseudonym) was her imagined community. The interview data suggest that Sarah was first motivated by her interest in Chinese culture. Since her exposure to more Asian art in London, she has been motivated by the ideal L2 self.

### **5.3.2 Sarah's participation in the two communities of practice**

This section discusses Sarah's participation in her two communities of practice, in terms of engagement, imagination and alignment, so as to understand in what way she took initiatives to move from the peripheral of the communities to a region closer to the centre. I will also report on Sarah's responses when she faced difficulties.

From excerpt 6, we can see that the two communities of practice, AAM and the Chinese speaking communities (see 5.2) have been intertwined with one another at the moment that she decided to study in UI, as she was eager to improve her Mandarin Chinese as a mean to get a job in AAM. It is noted that AAM was not the only institution that Sarah wanted to work for, what she really wanted to do was to work in a similar institution with a strong focus on Asian art. Therefore, her engagement (directly take part and engage with the member of the community) in the Chinese speaking community can be seen as an alignment (the deliberate effort made in order to be accepted by the members of a community) for her moving toward the Art profession. She also worked diligently during the terms in UI, such as pairing up a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese (language exchange) so as to practise her spoken Chinese, her Mandarin instructor told the researcher:

Excerpt 7:

I remember the first time she did a placement test for her pronunciation, she is very ambitious, and I am sure she did a lot of work after classes. In the final presentation, she was quite fluent and kind of spontaneous while doing the speech, so I am quite happy with her improvement.  
(IN: 49-52)

In addition to honing her language skills, she also worked in a museum in UI on a casual basis as another form of alignment. As she invested heavily in her identity as an Asian art specialist, it is not surprising

that she felt very frustrated when she perceived that the return of her investment was poor, which is the perceived poor learning environment in UI:

Excerpt 8:

Very disappointing, ve::ry DISAPPOINTING! Not a real teacher, so that was all very disappointing for last year (0.5). But we (the students in the master's degree programme) were all very busy doing History, Politics and Linguistics, so we didn't have time to think about the language class really, but pretty bad.

(S1: 173-176)

Sarah was not happy with the way her instructor taught her because English was the medium of instruction in the class, having no textbooks or learning materials for her to study independently at home was another issue that she saw as a problem. Felt frustrated, she enrolled on another Chinese course in the evening in the second term, she also expressed her thoughts in the class meeting at the end of the term, where the staff members and the students were the attendees:

Excerpt 9:

There was a course meeting (0.5). I specifically said to the teacher: please speak Chinese in the class. So he speaks more now, and we have a course book.

(S1: 194-195)

In the first year of her studies in UI, she directed her energy not only to learning, but also to the changing of her learning environment, including practising Chinese with a language partner, joining extra classes and reflecting her disappointment to UI. These are all examples of her alignment to negotiate her membership into the language speaking community of practice, which are also examples of her alignment to the Art profession. Nonetheless, there were times when these two communities of practice were disconnected, especially when Sarah was not sure if her Ideal L2 self could be achieved. For example, she thought about working in tourism for some time:

Excerpt 10:

**Sarah:** I am thinking (0.3), maybe I can work in the tourist industry in Ireland, because it seems to be growing, there are a lot of opportunities.

**Researcher:** What made you change [your plan?]

**Sarah:** [I haven't changed my plan], but to work as a curator putting on exhibitions working in Ireland, it is a very narrow, small aim to have (0.5), I just widen my aim a little bit.

(S1: 84-87)

However, she emphasised that it was a fall-back as she in the next interview:

Excerpt 10:

it is just a fall-back. I wanna work in a cultural institution, which is related to Asian art. Very specific.

(S2: 39-40)

When she was asked if she could not find a job in the Art profession, would she think it was a waste of time making so much effort to learn Mandarin Chinese, her answer was no. For her, languages were always useful, although the benefits of them are not always obvious to other people:

Excerpt 11:

I think learning a language is always useful, and it is very enjoyable to learn it, and it is very good for your brain to learn a language. And it is also interesting in its own right to learn it, through learning it you learn the culture and history. (S2: 78-80)

In fact, Sarah's view that language is very enjoyable to learn reflects her self-identity as a multilingual. She is a fluent French and Irish speaker, the enjoyment she could find in learning languages might have also contributed to maintaining her motivation when she was disappointed with her learning environment and at the times that when she had to balance between work, studies (other modules of the programme) and learning Mandarin Chinese.

### **5.3.3 The effect of capital on Sarah's participation in the community of practice**

Section 5.3.1 has shown that Sarah invested in her identities as a speaker of Chinese and art-professional heavily by taking initiatives to engage in and align herself with these two communities of practice. Her attempts to do so were, to a large extent, quite successful. While it is undeniable that she worked extra hard to take control of her environment, yet at the same time the data also reviews that the success was partly due to the forms and amount of capital she could mobilise.

Sarah's Ideal L2 self (being an art-professional specialising in Asian art) was built upon her identity as an art professional, which she had also heavily invested in before studying in UI. The investment into this identity involved two types of capital: cultural and economic capital. Specifically, Sarah stayed in Hong Kong for one and a half years and worked as an English teacher in Hong Kong for more than one year. In the last six months of her stay in the city, she worked as an artist putting on an exhibition in a charity funded art centre. Born and raised in Hong Kong, the researcher was surprised that one can earn a living out of independent art-work without any connection, then Sarah clarified that it was not a paid job:

Excerpt 12:

Because the English teaching job paid me so much, and I can save up lots of money and I could live off it. (S1: 77-78)

In the third interview, she told the researcher that this experience helped her a great deal in her job application for the position as an art manager in London in 2014. Coming back to Ireland, Sarah managed to find some part-time jobs that were related to art, such as working on a casual basis in a

gallery in UI (late 2015 to early 2016). As a result, her identity as an artist was consolidated. In the second interview, which happened in summer 2016 when Sarah was working as an English teacher “more than full-time” for her study trip to China, when the researcher asked if she would like to become an artist specialising in Asian arts, she objected the way the question was asked. It is because she identified herself as an artist:

Excerpt: 13

**Researcher:** You want to become an artist [in]

**Sarah:** [I am] an artist.

**Researcher:** Ok, if I say, you want to become an artist more involved in Chinese culture, am I right?

**Sarah:** I want to work in the Asian Art Museum (Pseudonym), so the summer before I started the course, I was applying for a job in the museum, but I didn't get it. So I thought I could do the course to increase my chance to get the job.

(S2: 130-135)

The researcher's question (i.e. you want to become....) put her in a non-artist position, but she had a strong identity and positioned herself as an artist. In other words, she did not need to “become” an artist, because she already is. In fact, although Sarah mostly worked as an English teacher full-time when she needed to support herself financially, her English teacher Identity did not stand out throughout the interviews.

The excerpts above show that Sarah mobilised her cultural and economic capital to build up her artist identity. First of all, she made use of her native language, English, to accumulate economic capital. Doing so, she accumulated her cultural capital by working as an unpaid art-exhibitor in the art-centre in Hong Kong. This cultural capital then facilitated her to get a full-time job in London. Second, while she could have accumulated more economic capital teaching English than working in a gallery in UI part-time and taught arts and crafts for children once a week, she chose the kind of jobs that paid her less, which reflects that there was some economic capital they she could rely on. It must be noted that Sarah worked extremely hard to build up such identity, her effort to look for sponsors (e.g., food and drinks) and venues for her exhibition as a foreigner in Hong Kong was also not easy. However, she might not have had the opportunities to making the effort if it had not been for the capital she possessed and accumulated. In other words, Sarah had the resources to decide what kind of person she wanted to become.

As far as her participation in the Chinese speaking community of practice as concerned, Sarah also mobilised her economic capital (paying tuition fees) to negotiate her membership into the centre of

art-profession by enrolling in a master's degree in UI. Although her investment was seen as poorly returned in the first term of her time in UI, she drew on her status as a fee paying postgraduate student (symbolic capital) to make change happen. For example, the Chinese instructor spoke more Chinese in the class and used a textbook in the second term (see excerpt 9). The teaching was perceived to have become better but still not good enough. Therefore, Sarah capitalised on her social capital to attend an evening Chinese class for free.

It is noted that although this qualitative part of this thesis is quite similar to Lamb (2009) and Lin's (2012) studies in that they all see capital as resources that affect second/foreign language learners' self/identity, an antecedent for L2 motivation, this study does not equate capital with socio-economic status. In particular, capital in Lamb and Lin's studies are strongly associated with their participant's family background, the three participants in this study are from a similar socioeconomic background. Sarah's capital is valuable because she positions herself in a different field (see 2.5.3). She went to Hong Kong where her English as a language is valued more than her home country, Ireland, this is why she could convert her cultural capital and symbolic capital in Hong Kong, she might not have been able to repeat this path of capital-conversion if she had stayed in Ireland. In this respect, Sarah's case is quite similar to Kinginger's (2004) case study on an American young adult's learning overseas experience. Specifically, Kinginger's participant, Alice, was born in a working-class family. Although Alice was disappointed with the formal learning setting (i.e., the host university in France), she situated her learning primarily in an informal setting, which helped her to achieve a relatively high proficiency level. While Kinginger suggests that Alice's success was due to her persistence and human agency, Reinterpreting Alice's experience, Block (2007) proposes that Alice succeeded in situating her learning in an informal setting is due to her symbolic capital of "American-ness" (Block, 2007, p.837). In fact, Kinginger also mentions that Alice managed to support herself through teaching English in France. Therefore, although Alice (in Kinginger's study) and Sarah's (in this study) process to accumulate their capital seem to be quite laboured, their way to accumulate the kinds of capital they want is non-replicable by non-native speakers of English (see also 2.5.3).

#### **5.3.4 the interplay among community of practice, capital, possible selves and motivation**

The previous two sections demonstrated that Sarah was a highly motivated learner of Mandarin Chinese, as evidence by her own narrative and her Chinese instructor's comment. Her motivation was also quite obviously linked to her Ideal L2 self, as she took initiatives to study in UI in the hope that she could become the kind of person she would like to become. Moreover, she also looked for a job where she could integrate her language skills in Mandarin Chinese with her knowledge of art so as to become a member of her semi-imagined community.

According to the theory of possible selves, the feeling of being in control, perceiving a goal as achievable and harmony among different aspects of self-identity are among the major reasons that transform one's

success-oriented possible self (or Ideal self in Higgin's term) into self-guide, or motivated behaviour. I propose that, Sarah's strong ideal L2 self was the result of her feeling of being in control, as she often took initiatives in attempts to change a situation in her favour with some degree of success. The perception of being in control also gave her the feeling that her Ideal L2 self was achievable. As the beliefs that she could become who she wanted to become and work in a profession of her choice became stronger, she became more willing to make effort to learn the language, which led to a higher proficiency level. The better she could master Mandarin Chinese, the belief that she could be an art professional specialising in Asian Art (Chinese art) became deeper, which fuelled her enthusiasm to learn the language. This reciprocal relationship between the belief of an achievable Ideal L2 self, motivation and proficiency is displayed in two excerpts extracted from the last interview (the third one), which took place four months before their master's degree programme ended. Excerpt 14 denotes her optimism for her career, and excerpt 15 represents the growth of her motivation and proficiency level:

Excerpt 14:

**Researcher:** But you think in London and other places, you would have more opportunities?

**Sarah:** Definitely, yes, definitely. But (0.2), there are opportunities in Ireland, it is just a matter of rooting them out.

(S3: 28-30)

Excerpt 15:

**Sarah:** [.....]Now, I am really motivated, and I wanna do HSK 5 in November. October, it will be ten again.

**Researcher:** When did you have the idea to do HSK 5<sup>8</sup>.

**Sarah:** At the end of the term.

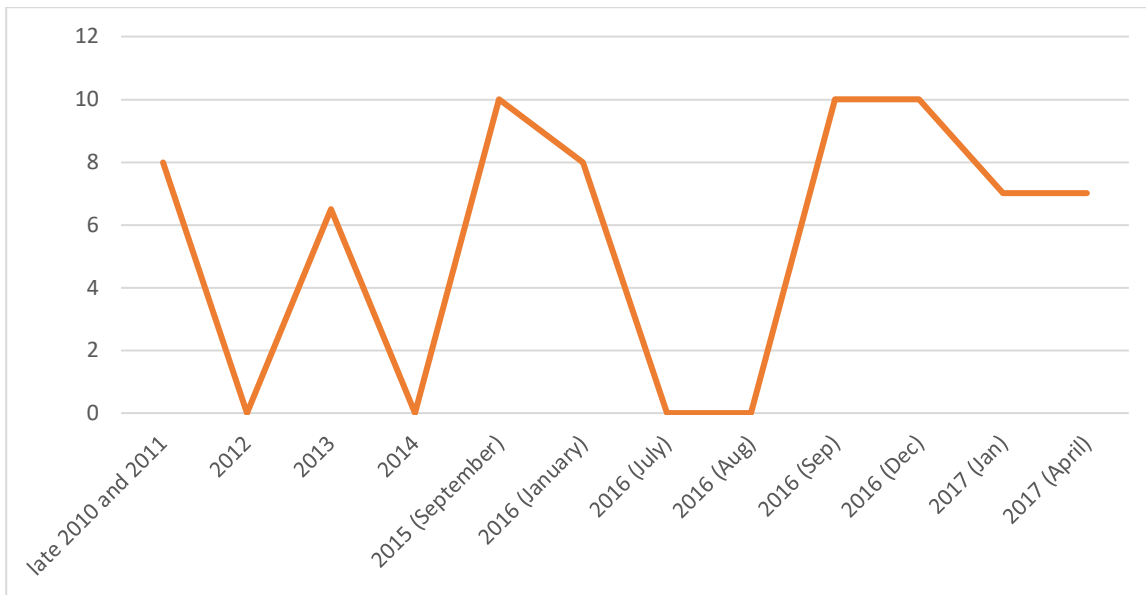
(S3: 114-117)

Having said that, Sarah's Ideal L2 self was not always strong. A case in point was when she thought about working in tourism, as she perceived her Ideal L2 self was not quite achievable (see excerpt 10 above). Other occasions that affected her motivation include her dissatisfaction with the Chinese instructor in UI (throughout the first academic year: 2015 to 2016, to a different degree) and in summer 2016, where she worked "more than full-time" as an English teacher to save up for her exchange programme to China. The waxes and wanes of Sarah's motivation in her Chinese learning history is illustrated in figure 1, Sarah's self-reported motivational plot:

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<sup>8</sup> HSK is a Mandarin Chinese proficiency test which consists of six levels. The higher the level, the more difficult the exam is.

**Figure 9 Sarah’s self-reported motivational change since late 2010 (the time she started learning Mandarin Chinese)**



The ups and downs of Sarah’s motivational trajectory is consistent with studies that took a dynamic approach that motivation is not linear and fluctuating over time (e.g. Chan, 2016; Mercer, 2011 and Waninge and Dörnyei, 2014). While the immediate learning environment and the long-term career prospect can be perceived as unfavourable and dim from time to time, Sarah was often motivated by the upcoming exchange programme in China, as she often placed high hope in the trip which was expected to provide good quality of teaching (and it is also true for the other two learners in this part of the study). In the run up to the exchange programme, Sarah describes her expectation as:

Excerpt 16:

Yes, I think it will be very structured, very strict. I will get a lot of homework, ↑yeah!. I can’t wait.

Indeed, her expectations were met as she told the researcher that the courses in China were very structured and the teachers were very professional. The prospect of going to China can be seen as a type of perceived plausibility for the success of her Chinese learning, and the fulfilment of the expectations deepened such belief. Therefore, it is highly possible that the effect of the exchange programme reverberated and motivated Sarah to work harder in her Mandarin Chinese.

#### 5.4 Tim: a strong ideal L2 self with weak motivation

Tim’s ideal L2 self is to become a Mandarin speaking marketing professional working in China. Tim is different from Sarah and Alba in the way that he did not speak a second language before learning



Mandarin Chinese, nor was he particularly interested in languages. This section reports on Tim's learning experience in terms of the three forms of belonging in his communities of practice, and how his experience affects his judgement about attainability of his Ideal L2 self through the lens of possible selves, and I will also discuss the role of capital in his participation in the two communities of practice.

#### **5.4.1 Tim's learning history and his Ideal L2 self**

Tim became interested in the Chinese language when he met two Chinese classmates in his bachelor's degree. As a marketing graduate, he saw the growing Chinese economy might give him opportunities for his career development. Unlike Sarah, who always proactively pursued what she saw as helpful for the attainment of her ideal L2 self, Tim needed some encouragement from his friend, Bob, along the way.

Excerpt 17:

I saw the ticket first, and I didn't want to learn it myself, and he was always interested in learning the language (0.4). Yes, I had the interest after him definitely, he had the interest before me. And he was always interested in learning languages as well. So, we gave it a shot.

(T1: 70-73)

Tim had a mixed motivation in the beginning of his Chinese learning journey. At first, the Chinese language was drawn to his attention because of friendship (his classmates at university and Bob) and his curiosity of Chinese culture. Although he also noticed the opportunities that learning the language could offer, he continued to learn Chinese before studying in UI because of the good learning environment, as he described: "the teacher was fun, the class was interesting". At this stage, Mandarin Chinese was more or less a hobby to Tim which also provided him with some sort of escape from the job he disliked:

Excerpt 18:

It is very monotonous, not much room for progression. Even if it does, it is not something I want to, the type of marketing.

(T2: 53-54)

This is not surprising why Tim was considering a new direction in his career. Although Tim thought it was an interesting idea to have a marketing job in China even before he learned Mandarin Chinese, he thought it was an impossibility. Therefore, all he was thinking about was a business programme or a master's degree in marketing, as indicated in excerpt 19 and 20 respectively:

Excerpt 19:

Um (2) yes (0.2), when I started the classes, I never t really believe that I would actually (h) get a job in China, or wasn't really tempted to. It was just something really interesting. It (getting a job in China) seemed to me quite unrealistic though. And then I saw the lessons, I gave it a shot. I like them, and I kept joining them. Still, I still didn't believe (0.3). This is something I enjoyed, but it's never going to happen.

(T2: 59-63)

Excerpt 20:

I got a job, but I didn't get the job I really want (0.4) there was a job I really wanted to get it, if I had got it, I would have been very pleased. So, I was thinking about doing a master's degree. I was thinking about something about business. I didn't want to do a course that I have to be committed to it if I don't 100% want to do it.

(T1: 97-100)

However, he learned from Bob (Tim's friend who was also a PhD student in UI), about a scholarship on the master's degree in Chinese studies provided by UI. This opportunity prompted Tim to re-evaluate the possibility of working in China:

Excerpt 21:

Bob told me about that. But I thought it was big, it is a very specific area, then I saw.....there were only two weeks left before I could apply for it. But I just applied for it, I probably won't get accepted but I just put my name down. The money was the second thing, I wasn't sure if I could afford to do this. I didn't know if I could get this potential scholarship (0.2). Then I got accepted, and the other thing it would be (0.5) I would like to get a job in China.

(T1: 101-106)

Since then, Tim's ideal L2 self (a Chinese speaking marketing professional) and imagined community (the marketing/business sector in China) emerged and began to play a role in Tim's Chinese learning motivation. Besides helping Tim to set a career goal, his Chinese learning experience also changed his self-concept. In particular, his Irish Gaelic learning experience at school made him perceive himself as bad at languages. He also lost interest in learning a new language because of it. However, attending the evening class changed his mind about language learning:

Excerpt 22:

I thought some people can learn a language easier, and I thought I definitely couldn't, but I don't believe it anymore. I think it is just about motivation.

(T1: 24-25)

Thus, this transformation of his self-concept paved the way for the development of his Ideal L2 self. If he did not believe he could learn the language well, he would not have invested his time in a programme where the language accounted for considerable amount of importance. In the next section, I will describe how Tim participated in the communities of practice (Chinese speaking community and his imagined community).

#### 5.4.2 Tim's participation in the two communities of practice

Similar to Sarah and Alba, Tim engaged in the Chinese speaking community by pairing up with a native speaker of Chinese to practise his Mandarin Chinese. However, according to his Mandarin instructor's account, he did not put in a lot of effort to learn the language, nor did he make much progress. The instructor explained:

Excerpt 23:

I think Tim is due to his own personality I think, he is, um, not a slow learner, but he is, kind of relaxed, not too ambitious about things. He will do something he is interested in, but he will not do something crazily throwing himself into studies. I think this is his own learning style.

(IN: 59-62)

While Tim admitted that he lost a lot of motivation in the first term and second term, he gave the researcher different reasons for his being so. He explained his loss in motivation in the first term in UI was due to the busy schedule, as he had the feeling of overloaded by other modules such as Chinese History and Politics (this also applied to Sarah and Alba). Although he had more free time in the second term, he chose to work rather than study as his job was a zero-hour contract, he must work whenever there were more opportunities available him, otherwise he might not be able to support himself in the low season where the company he worked for did not need many staff members. Although he agreed with Sarah and Alba that having a course book in the Chinese class would be better for their learning, he did not have the strong dissatisfaction like Sarah and Alba did. In fact, he liked the relaxing learning environment and instructor's being approachable. Therefore, his motivational drop was not due to his opinions about the instructor.

If Sarah was motivated mainly by her Ideal L2 self and the enjoyment she found in learning a language, Tim was mainly motivated by the future prospect that he could be successful learner, the only exception was the time that Tim was in China, where the high motivation was sustained by the actual learning environment.

Figure 10 Tim’s change in motivation between 2013 (the year he started learning Mandarin Chinese) and 2017

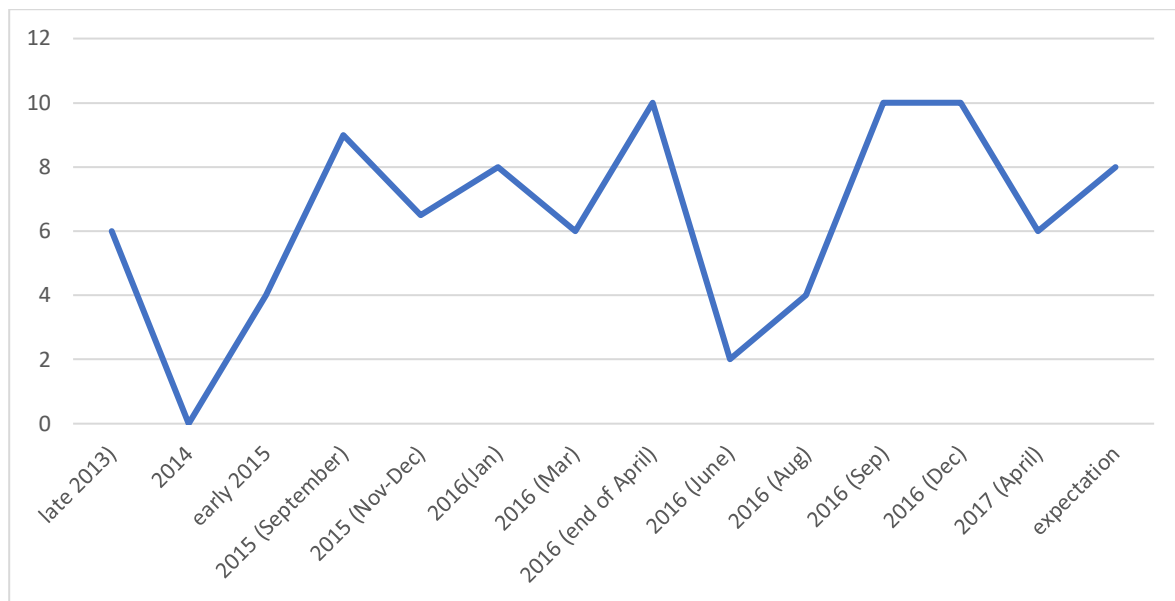


Figure 10 is Tim’s self-reported motivational change throughout his learning journey between late 2013 and April 2017. The chart shows that Tim’s motivation had three peaks over the three and a half years of his learning trajectory. The peaks happened in September 2015 (just before he went to UI), April 2016 and August 2016. In September 2015, Tim was hoping to have a structured learning environment (provided by UI); in April 2016, spending the free time on revising what he had learned in the time when he submitted all his assignment (April 2016) and in August 2016, he was looking forwards to the exchange programme to China. Nevertheless, except the last peak, which subsequently turned into a three-month long motivated period, all of his motivation surges were short-lived. As explained earlier on, Tim’s motivational fall in the first term was caused by the busy schedule on the academic front, whereas the fall in the second term was caused by his uneasiness about the instability of his income. However, I propose that there was one more reason that can explain why Tim invested relatively little time on his Mandarin learning, which had to do with his engagement in his imagined community (working in the marketing/business sector in China).

In contrast to his rather inactive participation in the Chinese speaking community of practice, Tim actively found out information about his marketing community of practice, which was thus far an imagined one. For example, he went to career fairs to talk to the representatives of some Irish companies that had a branch in China; he also wrote assignment about Irish-Chinese trade; wrote about Irish-Chinese trade for one of his short-assignment and incorporated his job hunting with his master’s thesis by working on a topic about the business ties between Ireland and China. While he collected data for the thesis, he contacted some companies in the sectors of his interest so that he could find out more

information about his job prospect<sup>9</sup>. His research has convinced him that he did not need to have a high level of Mandarin Chinese to work in China, at least for his short-term goal, which is to get an internship in an Irish firm that has a branch in China:

Excerpt 24:

Yes, may be 10 to 15 (company representatives at career fairs) there were many representatives, internships or jobs that they have, they seemed quite positive. I am also looking at some graduate programmes. Obviously if you want to work in China, a lot of companies have graduate programmes, for different reasons. If you want to do it for the Chinese market, *having Chinese, is not a necessity, it is definitely an advantage*. Yes, it may not suit a lot of business, but definitely some.

(T2: 194-198)

His informal engagement in the commercial community of practice informed him that little alignment (in terms of language skills) was needed to become a member of that community, he decided to direct his energy to his paid job and job hunting. This will be analysed in more depth through the lens of the lens of possible selves in 5.4.4

### **5.4.3 The effect of capital on Tim's participation in the communities of practice**

In the beginning, Tim thought that it would not be realistic to get a job in China, although he would like to have the opportunity. Then, Tim re-assessed the possibility of working in China in the later stage. The gap between “seemed to me quite unrealistic though” (excerpt 19) to “I would like to get a job in China” (excerpt 20) was bridged by the scholarship provided by UI and the source of information about that. This means that Tim's accumulation of cultural capital (a degree from UI) was facilitated by his social capital (his connection with Bob) and his agentic judgement and effort (weighed up the pros and cons of doing a master's in Chinese Studies and a business programme). The status as a postgraduate student in UI also allowed him to have more access to job-related information and resources, such as career fairs and a module in Business in China in his final term. The more information he obtained, the more certain that he could get a job in China and become a good speaker of Mandarin Chinese. Having said that, the confidence related to Mandarin Chinese learning was short-lived, as already discussed in the previous section. In a nutshell, Tim was often looking forward to the free time that he would have so that he could focus on his Chinese learning. However, he often chose to work in his paid job while he had free time. Therefore, his motivational surge was rather ephemeral partly because he lacked the economic capital that could allow him to focus on studies.

While low motivation can be caused by lack of capital, a better access to capital also resulted in a lower motivational level in Tim's case. As Tim gains the cultural capital as a student in UI, he could obtain more information than he did before studying in UI. When Tim learned that he did not need to have a

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<sup>9</sup> Tim was still not sure about the topic for his master's thesis when the data collection process of this research was over. Therefore, this piece of information is not in Tim's transcripts.

high level of Mandarin Chinese to work in China, he became more confident about his career development. Nevertheless, Tim's optimism about his job opportunities in China also means he often procrastinated his language learning plan:

Excerpt 25:

[.....] I am definitely intended to (learn Mandarin Chinese), and wanted to continue on, at the moment, I am just busy working on my thesis, before, there were assignments, *I didn't really put any time on it outside of the college*. But the reason why I would like to get a job in China is because I hope to pick up the language in a year or two, you know of course I like working in China, but also because I will have no excuse not to learn the language because that will be my best chance to do it.

(T3: 48-53)

#### **5.4.4 The interplay among communities of practice, capital, possible selves and its effect on motivation**

Although it is obvious that Tim was motivated by his Ideal L2 self, he was the least motivated among the three focal learners in this study. However, it should be noted that there were moments that Tim was very motivated, especially when he foresaw some moments that he could just focus on his studies. Based on the analyses in 5.4.2 and 5.4.3, I propose that Tim's perceived plausibility of the attainment of his Ideal L2 self was the most important determinant of Tim's motivational pattern.

Markus and Nurius (1986) propose that if one perceives their possible selves as plausible, the possible selves are more likely to provide impetus for actions. There were three occasions that made Tim think achieving a high level of Chinese was plausible. First, he was in a favourable learning environment in the of evening class in the very beginning, once he successfully learned some basics of Mandarin Chinese, he began to change his views on learning language and his self-efficacy, as he did not see himself as not cut out for learning a new language anymore, and his belief about second/foreign language learning is "I think it is just about motivation" (see excerpt 22).

The second occasion was when he learned that there would be a scholarship provided by UI. When Tim learned about the scholarship in UI, his attitude to getting a job from China jumped from "unrealistic" (excerpt 19) to a re-evaluation of the ideal, then he "put my name down" (excerpt 21), and when he won the scholarship, what was in his mind was "I would like to get a job in China" (excerpt 21). This perceived plausibility is not only about his career, but also about learning Mandarin Chinese, as it is illustrated in figure 2 that his motivation for learning the language soared just before he started in UI in September 2015. However, these motivating occasions were mediated by his tight schedule from course work and his lack of economic capital that allowed him to focus. This is why the high-level of motivation did not last long.

The third occasion was when he knew that it did not require a high level of Mandarin Chinese for him to get a job in China. Unlike the first two occasions, which facilitate to give Tim motivation for working

hard for his language skills, this occasion might not affect Tim's motivation positively in the short term. In particular, although perceived plausibility could contribute to self-regulated behaviour, the relationship between these two elements are by no means linear. Oyserman and James (2008) hold that when the attainment of possible selves is almost certain, or perceived to be achievable with reasonable amount of effort, the likelihood of self-regulated behaviour will be lower, because extra effort would be seen as unnecessarily (see also Hoyle and Sherrill, 2006). Therefore, Oyserman and James suggest that ideally there is an "observable gap" between the current and possible selves (2008, p.378). In Tim's case, as he perceived that it is not necessary to have a high level of Mandarin Chinese in order to work in China, he chose to direct his effort to some other aspects. Although he re-iterated that it is not an easy task to master Mandarin Chinese and this is what he wanted (see excerpt 25), the perceived high likelihood of working in China was interpreted by him as a high likelihood of immersing himself in a Chinese-only environment in the future, which will definitely help him to improve the target language a great deal in the future. Therefore, Tim was less like to make effort to hone his language skills given the perceived attainability of both career-related possible self and the L2-related possible self was high.

### 5.5 Alba: an intermediate learner who struggled to develop an ideal L2 self

Among the three participants in this part of the study, Alba was the only one whose first degree had considerable amount of Mandarin Chinese. Therefore, it would not be surprising that Alba's proficiency level was the best among the three when they started the master's degree together in UI. Another dissimilarity that Alba showed was that Sarah and Tim could comfortably tell the researcher about what they would like to use their Mandarin Chinese for, and had relatively clear trajectories that allowed the researcher to trace the evolvement of their Ideal L2 self, Alba's ideal L2 self is less clear and its trajectory of its evolvement was little short of traceable.

#### 5.5.1 Alba's learning history and the (lack of) development of her Ideal L2 self

Before studying in UI, Alba earned a bachelor's degree in "Languages and inter-nation-relations" in her home country, Italy. She chose this course because of the strong language element in the programme. In her programme in Italy, the students were expected to have mastery of two languages other than Italian at the end of the course. Beside the compulsory language, English, Alba chose Mandarin Chinese as her elective language, she explained:

Excerpt 26:

I love (0.5) there are two things about Chinese. The first thing is, it is a very fascinating language for Europeans, it is a very complex language. So it makes it very challenging but at the same time interesting. There are other challenging languages that I could have chosen. But China is sort of (0.5) everybody is looking to China nowadays, when I am learning Chinese, I have the feeling of learning something up-to-date. Of course Chinese is very ancient, but it is getting more and more popular (1) So, it is good to learn something fascinating, but at the same time it also matters now for what is going on.

(A1: 5-12)

Judging from excerpt 26, especially the statement of “everybody is looking to China nowadays”, one might think that Alba was learning Mandarin Chinese for its instrumental value, but the researcher found evidence to the contrary in the later stage of the study. When the researcher challenged Alba in the second interview that German was a highly sought-after language in Europe, she responded:

Excerpt 27:

**Alba:** I know I just I like the idea of Chinese as a new thing to study. But German has a long tradition. Studying a language for the language sake, I mean, even though my undergraduate is about learning languages, I don't consider myself as a linguist, because studying Chinese is completely different from learning any other languages.

I am not keen on studying other languages, like French and German, do you know what I mean.

**Researcher:** When you were asked to choose a language to specialise in, there was no question, it must be Chinese?

**Alba:** Yes, I picked it even before starting the course.

(A2: 39-47)

Alba told the researcher that Mandarin Chinese was *the one* even she began her bachelor's degree, and the reasons for that was because Chinese was “complex” and “up-to-date” (excerpt 26) and she learned it “*for the language sake*” (excerpt 27), which are rather intangible compared to Sarah and Tim's motives. Moreover, if we refer to excerpt 3, which was extracted from the same interview as excerpt 27, Alba did emphasise she needed a job and *not* learning the language for its own sake. In other words, excerpt 3 and 27 are contradictory to each other. There are two possibilities to explain this self-contradiction. First, Alba valued the instrumentality of the language but this instrumentality is relational: she would like to get a job where she could use the language she liked, but not a job that would pay her more yet she could not use the language she was passionate about, and a language without any instrumental value is an absolute no for her. Second, she used to learn the language for its own sake when she was younger, but over time she became more job-oriented.

No matter what contributed to this contradiction, it appears that there might not be a single most important reason for Alba to learn Mandarin Chinese *at the starting point*. This is quite similar to the



beginners and post-beginners in the quantitative part of this study, who were motivated by multiple reasons. However, as indicated in the quantitative research, the intermediate learners (the group that Alba belonged to) were mainly motivated by the Ideal L2 self.

Although over time Alba had developed an Ideal L2 self: a language specific future oriented ideal self, her Ideal L2 self varied quite a lot over time in terms of its nature and intensity during the longitudinal study. The depictions of her future plan are displayed below, excerpt 18, 19 and 20 were extracted from the first, second and third respectively:

Excerpt 28

No, I don't have it. I don't have it at all, I would like to do some cultural stuff, but I don't know (0.5), I don't know. Now my focus is to get enough knowledge to be fluent.  
(A1: 51-53)

Excerpt 29:

I don't know what I would like to do, to be honest. Um (0.2), maybe some, I don't know. I would like to do something that helps to connect Ireland and China more.  
(A2: 12-13)

Excerpt 30:

I don't have any idea what I want to do, ar (1), after my graduation I have no idea, but I really hope I can find::, a JOB, where there is some Chinese invol:ved, like even a little part, I hope so.  
(A3: 5-7)

The three interviews were conducted in December 2015 (excerpt 28), August 2016 (excerpt 29) and May 2017 (Excerpt 30) respectively. Excerpt 28 and 29 indicated that Alba's ideal L2 self may have been taking shape (and this is the reason why Alba was initially selected as one of the focal participants), but in excerpt 30 shows that her Ideal L2 self was absent, as what she wanted was just a job that required Mandarin Chinese.

I propose that Alba's underdeveloped Ideal L2 self had to do with her learning environment, or her community of practice in her university in Italy and UI. The fact that she could only mobilise limited amount of capital also contributed to the lack of development in her Ideal L2 self. These will be discussed in the next two sections

### **5.5.2 Alba's participation in the two communities of practice**

This section discusses Alba's participation in her community of practice, in terms of engagement, imagination and alignment, so as to understand in what way she took initiatives to move from the peripheral of the communities to a region closer to the centre. I will also report on Alba's responses when she faced difficulties. Unlike Sarah and Tim, who had two communities of practice, and one of which was either semi-imagined and imagined, Alba only had one community of practice. Although

Alba had an Ideal L2 self of being a good Mandarin Chinese user in a job setting, this future image of herself did not happen in an imagined social configuration. In fact, her Ideal L2 self went through a lot of ups and downs, as excerpt 30 shows that in the interview conducted at the end of data collecting stage, she only wanted a job with “some Chinese involved, like even a little part, I hope so”, which is not consistent with the definition of Ideal L2 self, which emphasises the qualities one would like to have *Ideally*, but not hopefully.

Alba’s community of practice was the Chinese speaking community where she was a novice learner trying to move from the peripheral region into the centre of the Chinese speaking community. Alba *aligned* herself with the community by taking the “Languages and inter-nation-relations” as her major, as she directed her energy to meet the definition of being competent in the community by doing so. In her first year, the progress of the alignment went on quite well. Alba perceived her grammar professor in the first year as someone who knows how to teach Chinese even though she is Italian, as she had a master’s degree in teaching Chinese as a foreign language. However, her alignment met with difficulties when she had different teachers after the first year. Although the new teachers were native speaker of her target language, she was not satisfied with the teaching:

Excerpt 31:

But I just think that they (the people in authorities) always think that once you have a Chinese native speaker, you can have a Chinese course, it is: not (0.3) My language professor, like, the one in charge of the course, made me do exercises, they were just Chinese, they didn’t have a degree in teaching Chinese, it is the problem.

(A1: 74-79)

What was described in excerpt 31 is similar to Alba’s experience in UI, where Alba perceived her instructor as a native speaker of Mandarin Chinese incapable of teaching. When the researcher asked Alba about her opinions on the instructor in UI, Alba went on to criticise native speakers of Mandarin Chinese who had no teaching qualification as a group and said:

Excerpt 32:

I am not satisfied at all, I do not see my level of Chinese improving at all. I learned some vocabulary. But most of them (0.3) like, I knew them already. My level of Chinese didn’t (0.3), now I know a few more vocab than before, but that’s it.

(A1: 108-109)

Although Alba expressed her disappointment at the end of the term meeting to the teaching staff in UI, just as Sarah did, she did not see much improvement in the class in the second term. In the second

interview, which happened at the end of the first academic year, she told the researcher that her Mandarin Chinese did not improve (excerpt 33) and the goal of the class was not clear (excerpt 34):

Excerpt 33:

I learned something, but I wouldn't say my Chinese has improved

(A2: 270)

Excerpt 34:

I think it is a mix of thing, like the level of the class, me and my classmates are at different levels. I mean, to write those paragraphs, I didn't need to make a lot of effort, some effort, not very big effort.

There is something, or, or, yea, and something in the course, and I think it is the way the course is designed. It is not designed to improve your Chinese, just something to do with Chinese, but the reason, the target is not clear to achieve. It is not we are focused on a certain level, like level A to level B, it is just, we do something.

(A2: 272-278)

When Alba was in Italy, the competitive environment and the end of the year assessment mean that she must work hard to pass the exam. Her Mandarin Chinese improved because she must pass the exams. However, in UI she did not need to make huge effort to pass the assessment in the class, which led to her perceived limited improvement. This limited improvement went against Alba's desire to make a lot of improvement in Mandarin Chinese during her two-year time in UI (Excerpt 35), which is supported by the comment of her Chinese instructor in UI (Excerpt 36).

Excerpt 35

Aw (0.5) no, but I want to use these two years to become fluent in Chinese. Because I kind of have the feeling like if it will be more, I will feel it is too much (0.5), I want to become fluent in these two years.

(A1: 34-36)

Excerpt 36

I think they have different goals, Alba came with very ambitious ideas, she wants to be very fluent..... She just wants to be fluent instantaneously.

(IN: 108-112)

Similar to Sarah and Tim, Alba also placed high hope in her exchange programme in China at the end of 2016. On the one hand, she was disappointed with her progress in Mandarin Chinese, but on the other hand, she thought if the master's programme had too much Chinese to learn, she would not be able to cope with other modules, and the trip to China could balance everything out because she would stay in China studying Chinese only:

### Excerpt 37

Yes, I am ok with it (the course in UI) because we are going to China. I will be focused on that. I will be going to Beijing University, the level will be very high, very strict.

The difference between Alba and Sarah is that Alba did not engage in out of class Chinese learning activity to an extent like Sarah did. For example, Alba did not take extra classes and did language exchange only sporadically. The limited engagement in the community of practice also made her less likely to lessen the negative effect of the difficulties she was facing in her formal learning environment. However, this phenomenon has to do with the amount and form of capital she could mobilise.

### **5.5.3 The effect of capital on Alba's participation in the community of practice**

Comparing to her classmates in both Italy and Ireland, Alba appeared to have less cultural capital and economic capital. For example, Alba went to scientific high school in her teen, because, according to her account, she did not realise that she likes languages when she was younger. This means her level of English was not as good as her college classmates in Italy, who went to the types of high schools that prepared them for language-related degree programmes, this also means that Alba had to work extra hard to keep up with her classmates. Moreover, the lack of economic capital also means she did not have any study abroad experience before going to Ireland. Although she had some opportunities for exchange during her time in Italy, she would rather stay in her home country as she was tutoring a number of secondary and primary school students to support herself in tandem with her studies at university.

In fact, the reason why Alba could go to Ireland and study in UI is because she won a scholarship which paid her tuition fees for UI. She also moved to Ireland because a family she was working for in Italy decided to move to Ireland and offered Alba an opportunity to go along with them. Although she changed her job and worked in the marketing firm that Tim was working in a few months after she started studying in UI, she hated her job, as her duties were the same as Tim's, asking questions on the phone and recording the answers:

### Excerpt 38:

[.....] because I am looking forward to China, and because I was working, and I was sick of my job, I didn't like it, so I was really looking forward to the trip to China.

Comparing to Alba's Ideal L2 selves shown in excerpt 28 (to do some cultural stuff) and 29 (help to connect Ireland and China more), her jobs were totally unrelated to what she would like to do. Dissimilar to Sarah who had the capital that allowed her to do what she would like to do (e.g., putting on an exhibition in Hong Kong) and explore the opportunities related to her passion and so that she could extend/develop her self-identity and Ideal L2 self, Alba could not extend her self-identity by engaging in the wider world where she could obtain resources on which her imagination could be based, this is

due to her lack of capital, and means she was not able to break out the learning environment created by this structure and myth.

Exercising her symbolic power as a postgraduate student with Sarah and Tim, Alba reflected her disappointment in the end-of-the term meeting with Sarah and Tim, and as a result the perceived teaching quality had improved, based on Sarah and Tim's account. However, Alba did not see it helpful in improving her Mandarin Chinese, and this may be due to the fact that Alba's proficiency level was relatively higher than all of the students in the class so that the instructor chose to look after the post-beginners, who were the majority of the class.

#### **5.5.4 The interplay among Alba's participation in the community of practice, capital and possible selves on Alba's learning motivation**

Alba's limited opportunities to participate in the community of practice and limited access to capital had two major effects on her possible selves and motivation. First, Alba must work extremely hard in her undergraduate in order to earn her bachelor's degree. Despite all the difficulties, she got a very good grade in her English, which she took a lot of pride in:

Excerpt 39

[.....] after I went to university, many people went to a language high school before so their English level was higher than me. And also because they travelled, they had a semester abroad in the UK, I didn't have a chance to do all those things. But I ended up getting very good marks because I studied very very hard.

But I mean, I can definitely see my English level improved since I have come to Ireland because everything I study from books, they start to make sense. I am very happy with my level of English.

(A2: 74-81)

I argue that Alba might have developed a self-concept of being hard working over the three years of her studies at the university, which has become a major source of her motivation during her time in UI. Social psychologists (e.g., Higgins, 1987; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Oyserman et al., 2006; Swann and Bosson, 2008) found that individuals often seek congruence among different aspects of self-identities, if one aspect is vastly different from the others (e.g., Ideal self and ought self), one would suffer from emotional discomfort (Higgins, 1987), low level of motivation (Oyserman et al., 2006) or the person may end up giving up one of the self-identity that is in conflict (Swann and Bosson, 2008).

Although Alba did not have a favourable learning environment and her capital was limited, and she had the feeling that she did not improve at all, she has never thought of giving up her learning. I argue that this was caused by her seeking of the harmony among self-identities. In particular, because she always sees herself as a hard-working person, to stop working on her Mandarin Chinese (become "lazy") would contradict her current self-concept as a hard-working student. This mental discomfort was characterised

by the ambivalence caused by being motivated but not knowing what to do, as Alba told the researcher quite anxiously in the first interview:

Excerpt 40

Not that I am not motivated, it's just that, I mean, they are just giving me vocab, it is not a Chinese course, I just use the vocab with my classmate, I don't have homework, I don't have chance to prepare for some presentations and be corrected, yes, I don't have these chances.

(A1: 130-133)

Although Alba claimed that she did not make any headway with Mandarin Chinese, her instructor in UI told the researcher the opposite (see excerpt 30 below). This may imply that Alba finally found out a learning method where she could make some progress alone, and worked hard outside classes with her own method:

Excerpt 41:

The second person that I am quite happy with is Alba, she is very (0.2) her language level was already advanced before she entered the class. And she keeps improving, she is the kind of student who knows how to, um, doing language drill, or practice. In the final presentation, I was very happy with their performance.

(IN: 53-56)

The second effect of her lack of capital on her learning motivation is that she placed a lot hope in her exchange programme in China, as this is one of the very few opportunities that she could avail of outside her usual learning environment. Her high expectations of the Mandarin Chinese course in China were also met. This provided her with hope which strengthened her belief that learning Chinese well was possible even if the environment in UI was not ideal. Her expectations were fulfilled and she was very satisfied with the teaching in China. Although the long-term effect of the fulfilment of the expectations remains unknown, in the short run, Alba became more motivated, as she planned to take HSK 5 exam when the next window is available in Ireland.

## 5.6 Chapter summary and discussion

In this chapter, I have integrated two very different yet compatible theories, namely *possible selves* (Markus and Nurius, 1986) and *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998), with the assistance of Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *capital*, to explain the relation between learners' experience, Ideal L2 self and motivation.

In section 5.2, I have described the background information about the three learners, their Ideal L2 self as well as their communities of practice to facilitate the discussion in the subsequent sections. Section 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 are the analyses of Sarah, Tim and Alba's learning history respectively. In each of these three sections, I first presented how the three focal learners' Ideal L2 selves were first developed and in

what way their Chinese learning was initiated by their human agency but mediated by the types and amount of capital they could mobilise. I then presented in what way the learners' capital-mediated experience was evaluated and represented cognitively by the learners and as a result influenced their motivation through the lens of *possible selves*. The analyses of these three learners' Mandarin Chinese learning history served to answer research questions 3a and 3b, which asked: 3a) What was the role of capital in the development of the learners' Ideal L2 self; and 3b) What was the relationship between the Ideal L2 self and motivation.

### **5.6.1 Summarising the three cases**

Among the three learners, Sarah and Tim exhibited strong Ideal L2 selves in the interviews. However, Sarah was much more motivated than Tim. Although some signs of the Ideal L2 self could be identified in Alba during the interviews, there was no evidence that Alba was motivated by the Ideal L2 self. I propose that the role of capital was crucial to the explanation of this phenomenon.

It is found that Sarah's self-regulated learning was strongly related to the perception that her Ideal L2 self was plausible. I argue that this perception was in part the product of her successfully improving her environment using her capital. On the one hand, her cultural capital (native language: English) allowed her to accumulate economic capital so that she could invest in an identity of her choice (an artist). Benefited from her experience of putting on an exhibition in Hong Kong, Sarah was then hired as an art manager in London, which strengthened her identity as an artist. On the other hand, even if there were times that she failed to obtain what she desired, she could make use her capital to enhance her chance of success. For example, Sarah's job application for a position in Asian Art Museum (pseudonym) in Ireland was rejected, but she capitalised on her economic capital to accumulate her cultural capital, Mandarin Chinese and a master's degree, in order to heighten her chance in work in a museum or gallery specialising in Asian art. She also mobilised her symbolic capital, the status as a postgraduate student in UI, to reflect her disappointment with the teaching in the first term in UI to make change happen. These are all examples that Sarah availed of her capital to change her environment to work in her favour.

According to *possible selves* theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986), a sense of being in control often increases the likelihood of self-regulated behaviour, as individuals who perceived being in control also tend to believe that their possible selves are attainable. I propose that Sarah's high level of motivation was facilitated by her Ideal L2 self, and her ideal L2 self was to a large extent capital-enabled. Dörnyei (2005, 2009) proposes that Ideal L2 self is the best predictor for one's L2 motivation, and Sarah's case supported this hypothesis. However, there were moments Sarah's Ideal L2 self did not function as a strong motivator, especially when she was prompted that her Ideal L2 self was not quite achievable. In this case, other motivating factors such as the learners' cultural interest in Chinese culture took over as the major provider of learning motivation.

Tim's Ideal L2 self was also enabled by his capital yet to a smaller degree compared with Sarah's case. Tim's Ideal L2 self was facilitated by his social capital, or his friendship with Bob, a PhD student in UI who provided Tim with relevant information. However, it should be noted that the emergence of Tim's Ideal L2 self has two stages. The first stage was when Tim has changed his self-concept as a bad language learner and believed that motivation was the most important factor. Bob also played an important role in the transformation of Tim's efficacy and beliefs of second language learning, because it was Bob who encouraged Tim to have his very first Chinese class. The change in Tim's self-efficacy aligned Tim's identity with his Ideal L2 self: a Chinese speaking marketing profession. If Tim did not even believe that he could learn Mandarin Chinese well, he would not imagine himself working in China and using Mandarin Chinese in the business setting.

Sarah's case shows that capital plays an important role in the development of the Ideal L2 self, and the case also confirm the strong link between the Ideal L2 self and motivation. However, Tim's case demonstrated that this strong link is not absolute but context-dependent. Hoyle and Sherrill's (2006) experiment suggests that when the gap between the Ideal L2 self and the current self-identity was perceived to be small, the likelihood of self-regulated behaviour would also be small, because one would perceive the difference resulted from self-regulated behaviour is too small and therefore the effort is not worth its while. In Tim's case, although the perceived gap between Tim's Ideal L2 self and current self-identity was large, the gap between his Ideal self (without the L2 factor) and current self-identity was small, and the gap between his Ideal self and Ideal L2 self was also small. In other words, Tim believed that working in China, at least as an intern, would not be difficult, and once he lived in China for one to two years, he could enhance his language skills. This is why Tim's Ideal L2 self did not generate self-regulated behaviour, which goes against Dörnyei's (2005; 2009) hypothesis.

Alba's case also demonstrated a strong relationship between capital and ideal L2 self, yet in a different way. Alba's case is an example that shows how one would struggle to develop their Ideal L2 self when capital is not accessible. Unlike Sarah, who could (to a certain extent) choose the kind of jobs she liked and invested in the identity by which she identifies herself, Sarah must work in a job unrelated to what she liked just to make ends meet. Moreover, without the economic capital and cultural capital (e.g., English, see Sarah's case) needed, Alba was not able to break out of her environment and explored more possibilities for development of her self-identity. This is why Alba's Chinese learning motivation seems to be primarily driven by instrumentality (prevention), this type of motivation instigates self-regulated behaviour because the learner tries to avoid unpleasant consequences (e.g., failed in an exam).

These three participants' Chinese learning experience, especially that of Sarah and Alba, demonstrates the importance of capital to learning motivation. Sarah's cultural capital (English) and symbolic capital (being a native speaker of the language) support the development of her ideal L2 self in that they facilitate Sarah to accumulate enough economic and the type of cultural capital she wants. Unlike many



studies in SLA where capital is used as a conceptual tool, this study neither sees capital as simply a synonym of learners' target language or its features (e.g., Ibrahim, 1999; Norton, 2000 and Siegel, 2006), nor does it strongly associate it with social class (e.g., Lamb, 2009 and Lin, 2012). In particular, Sarah and Alba probably have a very similar background in their home countries: they are both from an ordinary family, earned a university degree, and needed to find financial means themselves to further their studies. It is *the field* (see 2.5. 3) that set apart them in that English is perceived as valuable across different fields. Therefore, it is easier for Sarah to accumulate capital outside her home country than Alba does. This disconnection between capital and social class has hitherto been rarely highlighted in SLA. Therefore, it can be seen as a contribution of this study.

### **5.6.2 Answering the research questions**

#### *Question 3a) The role of capital in the emergence of the Ideal L2 self*

Research question 3a asked the role of capital in the development of the Ideal L2 self. The analysis of the three cases show that the accessibility of capital is crucial to the development of the Ideal L2 self. If learning is a process of "construction of identities" (Lave and Wenger, 1998), capital is an indispensable part in this process. Swann and Bosson (2008) propose that a change in self-identity is not only an enterprise of the person who seeks a change in self-identity, but also a process to influence other's perception and a favourable environment for the new self-identity to grow. In this regard, capital serves to control the outside world in different aspects of this constructing process. In the case of this study, Sarah influenced other people's perception of her by heavily investing in the self-identity of her choice, and she also created a favourable learning environment for herself by attending extra classes. Without sufficient capital, these might not have happened.

Although there is no evidence to draw a conclusion that capital is the most important factor for the emergence of the Ideal L2 self, its importance is rather noticeable in this study. However, the relation between Ideal L2 self and motivation is not straightforward. Tim's example demonstrated that the relationship between Ideal L2 self and motivation is a non-linear one. In particular, Tim's strong Ideal L2 self did not result in strong learning motivation.

#### *Question 3b) The relationship between the Ideal L2 self and motivation*

Despite the three learners' difference in their amount of capital, strength of the Ideal L2 selves and motivational level, one thing in common for these learners is that their motivation was closely associated with their current self-identity. In particular, Alba was eager to work hard is not only because of the instrumentality value of Mandarin Chinese (because she would like to find a job), but also because she was seeking congruence between her current self (as an diligent person) and her behaviour (the actual behaviour of working hard). Although there is a strong link between Sarah and Tim's motivation with their ideal L2 self, the effect of the ideal L2 self is based on the congruence between the current self-

identity and the Ideal L2 self. For example, Sarah had a strong identity as being an art professional and a relatively weaker (but still strong) self-identity as a multilingual and good language learner, which are compatible with her Ideal L2 self (an art professional specialising in Asian art). Regarding Tim, although he did not identify himself as a marketing professional, nor did he identify himself as a good language learner/multilingual, the disappearance of his self-concept as a bad language learner did make his current self-identity become more compatible with his Ideal L2 self. Therefore, the relation between motivation and current self-identity is also evident in this case study.

In this chapter, I have shown the importance of capital in the emergence of the Ideal L2 self, and demonstrated that the relationship between the Ideal L2 self is a complex interplay between current self-identity (which involves one's history); the Ideal L2 self (which involves capital) and the learners' perception of their social environment (see Tim's case). In the next chapter, I will conclude the findings of this project and discuss the implication of these findings for second/foreign language learning and future studies, limitation of this study will also be reported on.

## Chapter 6: Discussion and Conclusion

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the major findings of this study and discusses how the findings serve to better understand the relations among different motivational factors and language learners' intended effort in the context of learning Chinese as a foreign language in Ireland. The focus of this study was given to the concept of the Ideal L2 self, for self-identity has become one of the most important factors that holds sway over motivation and behaviour, not only in the literature of applied linguistics, but across nearly all disciplines in social science. In the following few sections, I will first recapitulate the essence of the research findings, and how they could answer the research questions outlined in chapter three. Then, I will compare the findings of this study against those in previous studies. I will then turn to the contribution of this study and the implication of it in foreign language pedagogy. This is followed by the discussion of the limitations of this study. At the end of this chapter, I will outline some possible directions for future research.

The review of the literature in chapter two points to the fact that self-identity has become the focus of inquiry in motivation research in SLA. Moreover, researchers also agree that imagination is an important component that links one's desire to actions. Although previous studies have documented the connection between the Ideal L2 self and motivation, these studies were mostly conducted in the setting of learning English as a second/foreign language. Therefore, there is a need to examine if the Ideal L2 self was equally crucial in the context of learning Mandarin Chinese as a foreign language. To investigate the role of the Ideal L2 self in motivating learners of Mandarin of Chinese, a questionnaire survey was conducted. However, previous studies point out that self-identity is a *fluid and multifaceted concept that changes over time and space*, as reviewed in chapter two, thus, using linear statistical skills alone may not be sufficient to capture the nature of self-identity and its association with motivation. This theorising of self-identity and attitude to linear statistics were mostly seen in studies that take a sociocultural and poststructuralist approaches to motivation and self-identity in the 2000s (e.g., Duff, 2002; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2000). However, the recent dynamic turn (Dörnyei et al., 2015) in SLA has brought mainstream researchers to the attention that a more dynamic view on existing SLA theories is needed. As a result, mainstream SLA researchers also give more attention to the variability and socially-situated nature of self-identity and motivation (e.g., Dörnyei and Ushioda, 2011; Henry, 2015 and Mercer, 2011, 2015). Thus, more researchers agreed that motivation research should take into account both cognition and social context (e.g., Lamb, 2009; Mercer, 2016 and Ushioda, 2009).

For the aforementioned common ground found between the sociocultural and psychological-oriented researchers, it is proposed that the dynamic turn in SLA could potentially bridge the gaps between the sociocultural and psychological worlds in SLA (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 2007 and Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2009), which have had very little intersection with each other (Zuengler and Miller, 2006). In fact, some

researchers have recently sought to bring together psychological and the context-dependent components in order to better understand how self and identity are related to second/foreign language learning (e.g., Henry, 2015; Mercer, 2011, 2015, 2016).

Based on the previous literature, this study formulated three research questions, which serves to fill the gaps in the literature. First of all, research on languages other than English is under-represented in the area of motivation research (Ushioda and Dörnyei, 2017). Therefore, the first research question was about the role of the Ideal L2 self in the context of learning Chinese as a foreign language in Ireland. The second research question was about group difference, which asked if different types of learners had different motivational profile and motivated by different factors. As the Ideal L2 self is the focus of this study, it also examined the strength of the Ideal L2 self in different learner groups. These two questions were answered using inferential statistical techniques, which were used to analyse the data elicited from a survey. While the approach used in research question two was very common in motivation research, a rather rarely used statistical technique, namely cluster analysis was employed in order to identify issues that might not have been able to be recognised using inferential statistics. This method also serves to refine the third research question. Research questions one and two were both investigated using questionnaire survey. The survey consisted of eight motivational factors commonly used in motivation research in SLA, and a construct called “intended effort”, which served as a scale that gauged the participants’ motivational level. Despite some inconsistencies are found between previous literature and the current study, the findings largely support the critical role that the Ideal L2 self played in the participants’ motivation.

Research question three was concerned about the development of the Ideal L2 self and its relation with motivation when social factors came into play. Specifically, it asked why some learners in the study successfully developed an Ideal L2 self but some struggled to do so. Previous research on Ideal L2 self mostly focuses on psychological factors; whereas these factors were often absent in socio-cultural-oriented research. However, it was mentioned earlier on that self-identity is the interplay between cognition and social factor, therefore, this study employed theories from both social psychology (possible selves), sociology (the notion of capital) as well as a sociocultural theory of education (communities of practice) to attend to the issues regarding the Ideal L2 self and motivation.

Having highlighted the theoretical basis and research questions in this study, I will summarise the major findings of this study in section 8.2. The findings of the three research questions will be discussed one by one in section 8.2.1, 8.2.2 and 8.2.3 respectively.

## 6.2 Discussion of findings in relation to research questions

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter, three research questions were formulated and outlined in chapter three, each of these research questions addresses three different areas concerning foreign

language motivation, namely the overall motivation of participants, group differences and how self-identity is related to motivation. The first two areas were attended to by means of survey, and the findings elicited using this method were presented in chapter four. The third area was investigated through longitudinal case studies, and the findings were presented in chapter five. In the following subsections, I will present the findings that correspond to each research question and sub-question one by one.

### **6.2.1 Research question 1**

- 1) What were the motivation for the participants of this study to learn Chinese?
  - 1a. What were the overall motivational orientation of the participants?
  - 1b. What were the prime motivator(s) for the learners to make effort to their Chinese learning?

The first research question concerns the participants' overall motivation for learning Chinese in this study, the aim of this question is to generalise the findings of the sample to the broader context of Irish society. It found that most participants chose to learn Mandarin Chinese because they liked Chinese culture, as reflected in the open-ended question of the survey. The second most important reason for the participants to learn Mandarin Chinese revealed by the data of the open-ended question is the perceived instrumental value of the language, followed by the learners' interest in the language itself. These three reasons can be conceptualised as the three variables often used in SLA motivation research, namely cultural interest, instrumentality (or extrinsic motivation) and intrinsic motivation.

Although the multi-item scales show that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of intrinsic motivation and instrumentality, Pearson correlations demonstrated that among these three variables, only cultural interest and intrinsic motivation had strong positive relation with the participants' intended effort. Although instrumentality was also positively correlated with intended effort, the correlation was quite weak. In fact, Cultural interest and Intrinsic motivation and Attitude toward L2 community were the three strongest predictor variables of Intended effort in the data set.

These findings answer question 1a and 1b. They showed that the participants learned the language mainly for their interest in Chinese culture and language, as well as the instrumental value of the language. However, only the variables of Cultural interest and Intrinsic motivation among these three factors gave strong motivation to the learners.

### **6.2.2 Research question 2**

- 2) Were different groups motivated by different reasons?
  - 2a. What was the effect of gender on the ratings on motivational factors, ideal L2 self and learners' intended effort?
  - 2b. What was the relationship between proficiency in Mandarin Chinese, ideal L2 self and intended effort?

2c. If between group differences were found in 2a and 2b, could cluster analysis find within group difference?

The findings presented in chapter four show that no significant difference was found between the male and female learners in this study, in terms of the eight motivational factors and intended effort. However, when the 92 participants were re-categorised based on their proficiency level, the intermediate learners appeared to be more willing to make effort to learn than the other two groups of less advanced learners, namely post-beginners and beginners. Moreover, the intermediate group was also shown to have higher mean scores on nearly all motivational factors, one of which was the Ideal L2 self. Another notable finding is about the role of the Ideal L2 self as a motivator. In particular, while the *Ideal L2 self* did not appear as a strong motivator either when the 92 participants were examined as a whole, or broken into three proficiency group, the significant role of the Ideal L2 self was not to be ignored, because when the intermediate group was examined, the Ideal L2 self was one of the two factors that positively correlated with the participants' intended effort.

On the other hand, when the participants were grouped together based on their motivational similarity using a more data-driven approach, cluster analysis, some interesting findings emerged. Specifically, while the intermediate group was found to have a significantly higher mean score than the post-beginners and beginners on intended effort when the participants were classified into different proficiency group, when cluster analysis was performed, the grouping showed that 2 of the 23 intermediate learners in fact had a more similar motivational profile to the beginners or post-beginners than the intermediate learners, and the group that the two intermediate learners belonged to also had a significantly lower level of intended effort and a weaker *Ideal L2 self* compared to the other group.

To summarise, research question two asked if different gender (question 2a) and proficiency groups (question 2b) had a different motivational profile, it also asked if these groups were motivated by different factors. The inferential statistics showed that there was no gender difference found in the data set in terms of motivational profile, as the male and female learners in the study did not show statistical difference in the eight motivational scales and their intended effort. Although the males were females seem to have been motivated by different reasons, it did not show that these differences led to a different motivational level. However, Cultural interest and Intrinsic motivation were the strongest motivators for the beginners' group, but the Ideal L2 self and instrumentality (promotion) were the strongest motivating factors in the intermediate group.

Regarding research question 2c, which involves the usefulness of an exploratory data analytic approach, the statistical outputs suggested that cluster analysis was able to identify within group differences that might not have been identified using inferential statistical techniques *per se*, where the group belonging of participants are often predetermined by the researchers (e.g., gender, proficiency levels, first language, to name but a few).

### 6.2.3 Research question 3

- 3) Why did some learners successfully develop their Ideal L2 selves, but some people's Ideal L2 selves were relatively weak?
  - 3a. How was the learners' effort to negotiate their Ideal L2 self mediated by social conditions, or the capital they possessed?
  - 3b. What was the relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation?

Question three was investigated using a qualitative method, narrative inquiry, or analysis of narrative, and the data was elicited through longitudinal case studies of three focal participants in the current study. The findings in chapter five demonstrate that capital influences the formation of the Ideal L2 self in two ways. First, participants can make use of their capital to invest in their own self-identity, or facilitate one to choose who they want to become. A case in point is that the first case presented in chapter five, Sarah, who had at least two self-identities professionally, namely English teacher and artist. However, she chose to invest in her self-identity as an artist, although focusing on teaching English could have been an easier career path for her. In fact, Sarah's Ideal L2 self can be seen as an extension of her current self-identity (i.e., artist), as what she desired to become was a Chinese speaking professional specialising in Asian art. According to the theory of possible selves, one of the conditions that could turn a possible self into motivation, or self-regulated behaviour, is the congruence among different self-identities. Another case, Tim, also went through a similar path in developing his Ideal L2 self, although he did not proactively shape his own current self, without the social capital (his friend, Bob, who encourage him to take a Chinese course and provided him with the information about a scholarship), he would not have been able to shake off the self-concept of being a bad language learner, which was in conflict with his Ideal L2 self.

The second role that capital played in the development of the participants' Ideal L2 selves was the opportunities to directly engage and align themselves with their imagined community. For example, when Sarah failed to get a job in Asian Art Museum, she decided to mobilise her economic capital to accumulate cultural capital, Mandarin Chinese, in order to heighten her chance should a similar job opportunity come by next time. Similarly, Tim's symbolic capital as a postgraduate student also allowed him to get more access to career-related information which might not have been available to him if Tim was not in UI. For example, he could talk to company representatives at the events facilitated by the university. Without these opportunities, Tim might not have had enough information to judge if his possible self (or Ideal L2 self) was plausible.

Question 3b concerns the relationship between the ideal L2 self and motivation. Although Tim's case showed many qualities of the Ideal L2 self, he did not make much effort to learn Mandarin Chinese. While a sense of control and perceived plausibility are prerequisites for turning the Ideal L2 self into motivation, Tim did not become more motivated when these two prerequisites were present . Oyserman

and James (2008) observe that the distance between a possible self and current self must be wide enough for one to regulate their behaviour to achieve it, if the target is seemed to be easy, the individual may not make effort to do it. In the case of Tim, although he perceived mastering Mandarin Chinese as a difficult task, he was convinced that it would be easy for him to work in China, at least as an intern, for one or two years. As the belief that living in a place where the target language is spoken could result in mastery of the language is rather deeply held, Tim's lack of motivation could have been caused by his belief that living in China would automatically give him opportunities to learn the language well. This explains why he did not perceive the need to work hard during his time in Ireland.

For the third case, Alba, although her Ideal L2 self appeared to be volatile, she was perceived by her language instructor in UI as motivated. I proposed that her hard-working self-image developed during her studies in Italy played a crucial role. In particular, she exhibited some uneasiness when she did not know what to do to improve her Chinese, she perceived herself as a motivated student but did not know where to apply her energy to achieve her goal in the first term in UI. Possible selves theory (1986) and identity negotiation (Swann and Bosson, 2008) propose that individuals often seek congruence among different aspects of self-identities. Since not doing anything went against Alba's self-concept as a hard-working person, she decided to work on her own and found a language partner to practise her Chinese with.

In other words, although empirical studies normally showed the association between the Ideal L2 self and motivation, this relation between the two concepts are not inherent, but context-dependent, and could be different from person to person.

### 6.3 The findings of this study in relation to the literature in motivation research

The current study's findings share much similarity with the studies that adopted Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. For example, the most advanced learners in this study were more motivated (i.e. scored higher in intended effort) than the other two proficiency groups; the intermediate learners also demonstrate stronger Ideal L2 selves than the other two groups. These findings is consistent with You and Dörnyei's (2016) in China. The finding that the relatively advanced learner group had a higher score on Instrumentality is also consist with Dörnyei's (1991) finding in Hungary. In fact, the important role of the Ideal L2 self as a motivator in the intermediate group also further supports the assumption that the Ideal L2 self and motivation are closely related to each other.

However, what is different from the literature is that no gender difference was found in this study. This result could have been caused by the fact that most studies in SLA were conducted in the school setting (Ryan and Dörnyei, 2013), yet the participants in this study were all adults. Moreover, the overall correlation between the Ideal L2 self and intended effort in this study was relatively weaker than the studies using the same construct. One of the reasons is that most studies in SLA targeted learners of



English, yet this study's target participants were all learners of Chinese. This raises the question whether the close relation between the Ideal L2 self and motivation is language-specific, or only applied to particular types of learners (e.g., the relatively more advanced learners, as this study indicated).

On the other hand, the qualitative research of this project also shows some similarity to the literature and theoretical assumptions. For example, there is evidence that the Ideal L2 self was a strong motivator, which was embodied in Sarah's case. What is unexpected is that Tim's Ideal L2 self did not lead to self-regulated behaviour. While this issue has some discussion in social psychology (e.g. Hoyle and Sherrill, 2006; Oyserman and James, 2008), applied linguists do not seem to have investigated reasons for the breakdown between the Ideal L2 self and motivation. Another unexpected finding is that although the three participants, Sarah, Tim and Alba had different intensity of Ideal L2 selves, and the effect of the Ideal L2 self on these participants varied from person to person, it is found that all of the learners' motivation was closely related to their current self-identity.

#### 6.4 The contribution of this study

This study has contributed to motivation research in three different aspects. First, it added to the literature studies on the motivation of learners of Mandarin Chinese. Boo and colleagues (2015) reviewed the major publications related to SLA motivation between 2005 and 2014, and found that English has been the language in question in most studies in this period. In a recent issue of the *Modern Language Journal*, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2017) lament that most SLA motivation theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are based on findings in research where English was the language of concern. They further explained the importance of cross-language validity if a model is claimed to be applicable to SLA in general. Therefore, this study contributed to the literature in that the learning motivation for a language other than English was examined.

On the other hand, the study also contributed to the field methodologically. Using cluster analysis, this study identified cases that had a different motivational profile from those who had a similar proficiency level. These cases might not have been identified if traditional statistical methods were used. Moreover, the study also documented how cluster analysis was run and how the researcher chose an optimal number of clustering solution in a step by step manner, which is thus far quite rarely seen in motivation research.

The third contribution that the current study brought to the field is that this study integrates a psychological theory (possible selves), a sociological theory (the notion of capital) as well as a sociocultural theory of education (communities of practice) to attend to the issues regarding the Ideal L2 self and motivation. This approach to self-identity reflects faithfully the recent conceptualisation of self-identity which see it as a system that involves cognition and is shaped by social contexts. In addition, the findings concerning the importance of current self-identity in learning motivation also acted as a reminder that while imagination and future-oriented self-identity are crucial to motivation, the effect of

future-oriented approaches (such as imagination exercises and intervention schemes that aim to strengthen language learners' Ideal L2 selves) could be undercut by not paying enough attention to language learners' current self-identity.

The fourth contribution of this study is that it considers the possession and acquisition of capital as a catalyst for motivation, which is quite different from the conventional function of capital in the analysis of second/foreign language motivation. In particular, this study emphasises that capital plays a crucial role in developing one's self/identity, rather than seeing capital as the target language or some linguistic features learners want to acquire. While a handful of studies also take this approach (e.g., Lamb, 2009 and Lin, 2012), unlike these studies, the current research demonstrates that capital does not necessarily have strong ties with learners' socioeconomic status.

### 6.5 Limitations of this study

This research project was subject to three major limitations. The first limitation was the small sample size of the survey ( $N = 92$ ). The small sample size means that the test results from this research may not have enough statistical power. While, the small population in Ireland means that the Chinese learning population in Ireland should be relatively small, which could at least theoretically reduce the negative impact brought about by the small sample size, yet the small sample size may not allow the findings in the study to be generalisable in the bigger English speaking world. Moreover, the small number of participants in this study also limited the techniques can be used in this study. For example, some more fine-grained analyses could have been performed using two-way ANOVA, such as the effect of the learners' linguistic background and proficiency level in relation to their Ideal L2 self, if the number of participants in the research were larger.

The sample issue also limited the use of cluster analysis. In particular, previous studies in motivation research often yielded a larger number of clusters. For example, Csizér and Dörnyei's(2005) study identified four motivationally different groups ( $N = 4765$ ); Henry (2011) selected a 5-cluster-solution with a sample size of 101; Papi and Teimouri (2014) yielded five groups from a sample of over 1, 278 learners of English in Iran. However, this study only found two learner groups that were motivational very different. As there were only two motivational profiles could be compared and analysed, the power of cluster analysis, identifying structures in seemingly unstructured data set, may not have been exhausted in this study, as more motivational types could have been identified, which could also have provided information about the motivation for learning Chinese in Ireland.

The second limitation was caused by the method of cluster analysis itself. One of the biggest challenges of using cluster analysis is how researchers decide the number of clusters identified in the data set. For example, a researcher always need to think carefully whether, for example, a three- clustering model is better than a four-clustering model. Unlike inferential statistical skills commonly used in SLA, cluster

analysis does not have the best parameter by which researchers can choose an optimal number of clusters. Specifically, inferential statistics often produces the outputs with  $p$  values and effect size, which function as indicators that inform researchers if they should accept or reject the hypothesis and to what extent a variable is associated with another one. However, cluster analysis does not provide an absolute cut-off point by which researchers can be absolutely sure how many clusters is the best clustering solution, although some methods were suggested to be good rule of thumbs for the selection of optimal number of clusters.

Although this study generated a complete list of possible clustering models and employed silhouette coefficients and Cohen's Kappa to compare and validate the final clustering solution, there are many methods that can be used for validating clustering-solutions. Unfortunately, agreement has not been reached whether one method is better than the other, and each validating method might yield slightly different result.

The third limitation of this study is about its research design. Dörnyei (2014) suggests researchers should run cluster analysis first and choosing participants from each cluster to understand why they had developed a particular motivational profile. While the researcher agrees that this "retrodictive" method (Dörnyei, 2014) is a more optimal way of using cluster analysis to facilitate qualitative case studies, it was not used in the current study due to the time limit imposed on this project. In particular, the quantitative data collection ended just six months before the end day of the project (due to the difficulties of locating the participants and building up a big enough data set), a longitudinal case study would not have been possibly conducted given the time limit of this project is three years. Indeed, using the results of cluster analysis to select the focal participants could be a good way of triangulating the judgement of the researcher in the process of sampling focal participants.

The last challenge this study faces is the use of a single self-report item in the questionnaire survey (question number one, see appendix 1) as basis for grouping respondents according to Chinese proficiency levels. While this practice is not unusual in motivation studies in SLA, this approach runs the risk of respondents reporting their Chinese competence erroneously. For example, learners with a longer learning history may perceive themselves as more competent. The shortcoming of using self-report item to categorise learners is partly offset by the placement test run by the Chinese course providers who contributed to the survey (e.g., the Confucius Institutes) before the participants enrolled on the Chinese courses. However, the reliability of the question is not guaranteed due to the fact that not every course provider tested their students before the commencement of the courses. In fact, unlike learners of English, learners of Chinese are not always required to demonstrate their proficiency level, because Chinese plays a less important role as a gate keeper for promotion and further studies. Therefore, it is difficult to objectively compare learners' proficiency levels if they attend courses run by different course providers.

## 6.6 Future research directions

Although the researcher set out to answer the three research questions mentioned above (and the seven sub-questions), along the way of data collection and data analysis, some new questions related to this study ignited the interest of the researcher, which can also be possible research directions in motivation research in the future. The first possible direction is the effect of one's early language learning experience on their current motivation. In particular, during the interviews, participants often mentioned how their Irish Gaelic learning experience shaped their perceptions of language learning. Therefore, one of the future research direction suggested is about how learners' language learning experience affects the motivation for learning a new language. It is hoped that this approach can take learners history into account, as the majority of quantitative studies in the field only adopt a cross-sectional approach that compare and correlate different variables.

The second possible future research direction is the relation between social stratification and motivation. This study has found that capital is an important factor for foreign language learners development of Ideal L2 selves, arguably the most important factor for learning motivation. In other words, this study suggests that capital did not only affect the learners' chance to engage with their imagined community, but also the formation of their self-identity, which is likely to affect the learners' motivation. Although some studies in the field have addressed the issue (e.g., Lamb, 2004; 2009; Norton, 2000), Block maintains that the issue of social class has not been sufficiently addressed in applied linguistics.

The third possible future research direction is the use of an integrated approach that take social and psychological factors into account in motivation research. As theorists generally agree that self-identity is a system which is also an interplay between social factors, cognition and agency, future studies are suggested to take this approach to self-identity when the concept is used in motivation research.

## 6.7 Conclusion

This study has provided further support for the validity of the construct of the Ideal L2 self as a motivator, as it was found to be an important factor that provided impetus for the intermediate learners in this study. Moreover, cluster analysis also found that the Ideal L2 self was stronger in the group learners with greater intended effort. However, one should not lose sight of other factors, as cultural interest has been shown to be an important motivator across different proficiency groups, and the groups yielded by cluster analysis. It is suggested that learners with different proficiency level was motivated differently. For beginners, interest in Chinese culture could be the best motivator in the context of learning Chinese; whereas the more advanced learners (intermediate level) tended to be motivated by the Ideal L2 self. This assumption was supported by the data elicited from the longitudinal case studies, for the account of all the interviewees demonstrated that they set out to learn Mandarin Chinese, among other reasons, for their interest in Chinese culture. While their ideal L2 selves were developed or had

not been developed due to different reasons, the amount and form of capital they possessed played an important role in it.

In the case studies, the two learners with more capital also appeared to have a stronger Ideal L2 self, whereas the learner with less capital only exhibited qualities of the Ideal L2 self temporally. Therefore, Ideal L2 self should not only be investigated from a psychological perspective, but also from a sociological perspective. In fact, there is psychological evidence to show that one's capacity for changing their own environment is one of the conditions for their negotiating a new self-identity. If, from the perspective of communities of practice (Wenger, 1998), learning is a way for one to extend their self-identity, and the development of new self-identity involves resources to change the learners' surroundings (Swann and Bosson, 2008), one would not be surprised to see that those with less resources would have more difficulties in extending or changing their self-identity. These resources are not only important for learners to directly engage with their target community of practice, but also gave them a sense of control and the feeling that their Ideal L2 self is achievable. Furthermore, the study also found that congruence among different aspects of self-identities are of great important in learners' motivation, a congruent relation between self-identities could generate self-regulated learning even if one's Ideal L2 self was relatively weak.

In conclusion, given that the development of the Ideal L2 self and learning motivation is often both cognitive and socially situated, learners' Ideal L2 self and motivation are likely affected by both psychological and sociocultural factors. Therefore, educators should try to understand learners' social context and self-concepts in their practice, but not assume that there is a one-size-fit-all best motivator that learners could become motivated as long as their Ideal L2 selves are stimulated.

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# Appendix 1: The finalised questionnaire for learners of Chinese:

## A survey on motivation for learning Chinese

Hello, my name is Chung Kam Kwok, and I am a Ph.D. student in Applied Linguistics at Trinity College Dublin (TCD). My research is about what makes people want to learn Chinese. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop answering the questions at any time without any consequences. It takes about 5-10 minutes to answer the questions. Please note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, I'm just interested in your personal opinions. Your answers will be entirely anonymous. If you have any questions about the research project, you can ask me at [kwokc@tcd.ie](mailto:kwokc@tcd.ie) or you can contact my supervisor in TCD, Dr Lorna Carson ([carsonle@tcd.ie](mailto:carsonle@tcd.ie)).

Thanks again! I really appreciate your time.

### Part one

- 1) What proficiency level is your Mandarin Chinese?

I am not learning Mandarin Chinese

Beginner

Post-beginner

Intermediate

Upper intermediate

Advanced or above

- 2) How many other language(s) do you speak in addition to English and Mandarin Chinese?

I don't speak any languages other than English and Chinese

One

Two

Three

Four or more

- 3) If you speak any other languages, please write them here, starting with the language you speak best (please include Chinese and English):

\_\_\_\_\_

- 4) Have been to a Chinese-speaking country, how long did you stay? If not, please skip this question.

(If you have been to more than once, or to several Chinese-speaking countries, please indicate your longest single visit.)

Yes, I have been to a Chinese speaking country, and my visit was:

Less than one month

One to three months

Three to six months

Six months to one year

One year or longer

- 5) How many hours of Chinese class do you have each week?

Less than one hour

Between one and two hours

Between two and three hours

Between three and four hours

Between four and six hours

Six hours or above

- 6) How many hours will you spend on learning Chinese outside class each week?

Less than one hour

About one to two hours

About two to three hours

About three to four hours

About four to six hours

Six hours or above

- 7) How long have you been learning Chinese?

Less than 3 months

3 to 6 months

6 months to 1 year



- 1 to 2 years
- 2 to 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 5 to 7 years
- 7 to 9 years
- 10 years or longer

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

12) Learning Chinese is important for me because it will allow me to meet new people.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

8) Are you majoring (or did you major) in Chinese Studies or Chinese language in your degree?

(In other words, is (was) Chinese Studies or Chinese language a core part of your university qualification?)

Yes  No

13) I'm trying as hard as I can to learn Chinese.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

9) Why are you learning Chinese? If you are learning Chinese for several reasons, please write them down in the order of importance for you

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14) I like Chinese music.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

10) I'm learning Chinese because I like to learn new things.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

15) I'm learning Chinese because I like to challenge myself.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

11) I'm learning Chinese because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak Chinese

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

16) I work hard at learning Chinese outside class.

1                      2                      3                      4                      5                      6                      7

Strongly Disagree

Strongly Agree

17) I'm learning Chinese because speaking Chinese will enhance my skill-set.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

18) I like Chinese films/drama

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

19) If my Chinese teacher gave our class optional work, I'd choose to do it.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

20) I'm learning Chinese for the thrill of learning a new language.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

21) I'm learning Chinese because speaking Chinese will help me when travelling abroad.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

22) I'm interested in the history of China.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

23) I usually prepare well for my next Chinese class.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

24) I enjoy learning the linguistic features of Chinese.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

25) I'm learning Chinese because speaking Chinese will help my future career opportunities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

26) I seize every opportunity to speak Chinese.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

27) I'm learning Chinese because speaking Chinese will help me earn a better salary.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7  
Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

28) I'd like to travel to Chinese-speaking countries





Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	57) Chinese is not a difficult language.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	52) I'm learning Chinese because having Chinese is a stepping stone to more opportunities.			Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	58) Native Chinese-speakers are very friendly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	53) I'm just as talented as other people when it comes to learning Chinese.			Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	59) Learning a new language is difficult.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	54) Times passes quickly in my Chinese classes.			Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	60) I'm learning Chinese because I'd like to know more about Chinese people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	55) I enjoy completing difficult exercises in my Chinese class.			Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	61) I'm learning Chinese because people important to me think I should do it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	56) I'm learning Chinese because I want to participate in Chinese-speaking society.			Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				
Strongly Disagree		Strongly Agree	62) I really enjoy listening to native speakers of Chinese.							



- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Professional training/diploma
- Undergraduate
- Masters
- PhD

Current country of residence?

\_\_\_\_\_

If you enjoyed answering these questions, I am seeking learners of Chinese for some short individual interviews where we can discuss these topics in a little more detail. If you would like to hear more about this part of my study, please provide your email address below. You are under no obligation to participate in an interview even if you do provide your email address.

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Many thanks! 谢谢!

Which of these best describes your current occupation?

- Employed
- Self-employed
- Unemployed/looking for work
- Home-maker
- Student (Undergraduate)
- Student (Postgraduate)
- Retired

Negatively keyed items:

34) I can't really imagine myself ever being able to converse properly in Chinese

46) I'm the type of person who would feel anxious if I had to speak to someone in a foreign language.

49) I don't like meeting people from Chinese-speaking countries.

50) Chinese is more difficult for me than most European languages.

59) Learning a new language is difficult.

## Appendix 2: Alba's first interview transcript

### Interview Alba 2015 Dec 16 (35 minutes)

- Researcher:** Why did you sign up for the Master's degree?
- Alba:** I want to keep studying Chinese, I also want to (0.3) get to know more about the Chinese society, the current situation and so on.
- 5 **Researcher:** Why Chinese, why not the other languages:
- Alba:** I love (0.5) there are two things about Chinese. The first thing is, it is a very fascinating language for Europeans, it is a very complex language. So it makes it very challenging but at the same time interesting. There are other challenging languages that I could have chosen. But China is sort of (0.5) everybody is looking to China  
10 nowadays, when I am learning Chinese, I have the feeling of learning something up-to-date. Of course Chinese is very ancient, but it is getting more and more popular (1) So, it is good to learn something fascinating, but at the same time it also matters now for what is going on.
- Researcher:** You studied Chinese as well in your undergraduate degree, did you major in the  
15 language?
- Alba:** I majored in 'Languages and inter-nation-relations'.
- Researcher:** What languages did you learn?
- Alba:** In my course, English is compulsory, and you could choose another language, and I chose Chinese. And everything linked to inter-nation-relations.
- 20 **Researcher:** Why did you choose Chinese over English for your Master's degree?
- Alba:** Because after 3 years of learning Chinese, I couldn't say I know Chinese. Even now, my level of Chinese is not enough (0.3), my English is enough for me to work and do things.
- Researcher:** English is easier?
- 25 **Alba:** Absolutely, it is easier, after 3 years of English in college, and 1 year living in Ireland, I don't have any problem with communication using English.
- Researcher:** You think you still don't know much about Chinese after all these years of studies?
- Alba:** Yes, in some ways, I still feel frustrated, because, since you have to learn a lot of thing, it's not like only.....there are a lot things involved in studying Chinese, so it takes more time (to learn Chinese) than any other languages do. Because you need to learn all the pronunciation, the pinyin, the tones, the ideogram, and also the structure of phases are so far away from the European ones. It is difficult to remember how to say things, how to express what you want.  
30
- Researcher:** Does the frustration make you want to stop?
- 35 **Alba:** Aw (0.5) no, but I want to use these two years to become fluent in Chinese. Because I kind of have the feeling like if it will be more, I will feel it is too much (0.5), I want to become fluent in these two years.
- Researcher:** Have you come across any moments that you want to give up?
- 40 **Alba:** NO, never (0.3), never, but also it is not something that (0.3), I think education is very important, anyway I had to finish my undergraduate, and I wanted to do my master's. Because nowadays, without these two tools, where do you want to go? in some way. So I took for granted I had to study at least 5 years for my (higher) education in



general. So I think it is part of my 'package' in some way, I have never thought of stopping. But it is really crucial for me to become fluent in these two years.

45 **Researcher:** When you were doing your undergraduate, did you come across any situation that made you want to stop?

**Alba:** No, I have never experienced something like that. The only thing that I have experienced is, I feel I am not going anywhere. Like my knowledge is not improving. That is the most frustrating thing, not the (1) I have never wanted to give up.

50 **Researcher:** When you feel you are not making any progress, what would you do? You study harder, you take a break?

**Alba:** I don't know.....I am not very satisfied. After studying all these languages, I think it is the way you learn the language makes the difference. I am determined to learn Chinese, but the way they teach me Chinese is not very effective.

55 **Researcher:** You mean here (in the University of Ireland), or your undergraduate course?

**Alba:** Both, I don't feel that the way they teach me make me improve. When you don't have the tool to improve your language skills. Not that I stop, but I just don't know what to do. So I don't do more.

60 **Researcher:** You just keep studying?

**Alba:** Yes, I keep doing what I had to do (2). Like, when I was in my undergraduate degree, I had exams at the end of the year, they were written exams, oral exams, or maybe morphology phonology and translation exams or business Chinese, I had to study. But maybe like I did everything before the exam because I had to do the exams. But since like during the years I could have the.....I go to the classes, I learn the grammar, but I don't have the actual chance to use all those things, to master all those things they teach me. And I feel alone, and it is very difficult when you have to do those things alone.

**Researcher:** How about your classmates in your undergraduate?

70 **Alba:** They felt exactly the same. The same way.

**Researcher:** So the course was not helping?

**Alba:** No, my Chinese grammar professor, she was very helpful. Whenever I went to her class, I always understood more how to use things. But I think learning a language, apart from understanding the grammar, which is very important, you have to practise it. We did have classes for exercises, and like maybe a bit of conversation. ↑ But I just think that they always think that once you have a Chinese native speaker, you can have a Chinese course, it is not. My grammar professor, she is Italian, but she did a master's degree in China in teaching Chinese. So she knew how to teach Chinese. My language professor, like, the one in charge of the course, made me do exercises, they were just Chinese, they didn't have a degree in teaching Chinese, it is the problem.

75 **Researcher:** Which course are you referring to?

**Alba:** It was like something like a (0.2), just like here, Mandarin, you went in, you did some exercise, the grammar professor, from two to four hours per week of grammar, two to four hours of conversation and exercises.

80 **Researcher:** You think they were not able to teach, even if they were Chinese?

**Alba:** They weren't able to teach. There is huge difference between the ways they teach Chinese and English. Because English you have the grammar, but also have

- 90 translation classes. You translated something, and they corrected your work, so you have the chance to see your mistakes, you keep improving. You do a lot of listening, but all in the classes, and you have a lot of homework. ↑I think homework is very important. Apart from say 'yes, I know', when you do your homework, you put in practice what you have learn. They weren't prepared enough to teach Chinese.
- 95 And also in Dublin, I attended an IELTS English course. I saw that they teachers may not have a degree in teaching, but they had to do a course in order to teach. So I learned a lot of things attending this course, because they were all very engaging and also they gave us homework, at the end of the week, we had a mock test, so I kept practising the language, and my English improved a lot. That is the thing. I know the demand for Chinese classes is improving, but I think that they just say, he is a Chinese speaker, and they put him there. But they are not helpful at all.
- 100 I understand the reason behind it, but I know that teaching a language is not that easy, you need to know the tools, you need to know what your students need. And one of my first year English teacher went to this kind of course. (When I was in my undergraduate) We learned different vocabulary, and she made us use the language straight away, she always give homework, and we had mock tests at the end of the weeks make you (0.4) do your best to, you don't have a long distant exam, you had each week to practise your language skills. I think they don't have the tools to teach Chinese in a proper way.
- 105
- Researcher:** How about here?
- Alba:** I am not satisfied at all, I do not see my level of Chinese improving at all. I learned 110 some vocabulary. But most of them (0.3) like, I knew them already. My level of Chinese didn't (0.3), now I know a few more vocab than before, but that's it. The only thing that has improved is I feel more confident about something we practised in class, I feel more confident because I said that more and more, but they are already my knowledge, I just didn't have the chance to practise it. But my overall level of Chinese 115 hasn't improved much. I just (0.4) I feel more confident about more things.
- Researcher:** Have you done anything outside the class to improve your Chinese?
- Alba:** The problem is that, we go to class, our professor wrote down some vocab, we do some practice on what we have learned from him, but we never had handouts, we never have books, we never have homework. We don't have anything. I have my 120 vocab, when I look at that, I don't have any homework to be corrected, it is not good. I only have my vocab, I don't have the tools to master it. I don't have anything to use them and be corrected, I just have my vocab.
- Researcher:** I know there are a lot of apps that can help improve your language skills, do you use these tools?
- 125 **Alba:** In some way, I mean (0.5), I used enough, I think they help you to master the vocabulary and ideograms, but I don't have the chance to (0.5) they don't help me express myself better. It's (0.4) like, learning vocab without anything else is not helpful at all. If I don't know how to express myself through those vocab, it's not helpful at all.
- 130 **Researcher:** Would you say you are not as motivated as when you first came here?
- Alba:** Not that I am not motivated, it's just that, I mean, they are just giving me vocab, it is not a Chinese course, I just use the vocab with my classmate, I don't have homework, I don't have chance to prepare for some presentations and be corrected, yes, I don't have these chances. I have some chances to do some dialogues with my classmates

135 (0.4) it's never like homework that we had to prepare at home. We just sit down and we say what we remember.

**Researcher:** You are very enthusiastic, but I don't see any elements that I see in other people. What exactly gets you going?

140 **Alba:** At this moment, I don't know. It is not just feeling not progressing, <it is not just my feeling, it is my classmates who also have the same feeling, we've discussed it. We have pretty much the same view that we are not improving our Chinese.> But I AM NOT GOING TO ACCEPT THAT I AM NOT IMPROVING. >I am going to talk about the way they teach us Chinese <, and I hope that they can change it. Because alone, I can't learn Chinese. I can't learn alone without being corrected (0.5)that is why people go to university because alone it is very difficult to learn, I am not going to pursue the part of learning alone, I will (1), what I am saying to you I will be open and discuss with people involved in the teaching of Chinese.

145 **Researcher:** When you learn your Chinese, what situations you think you can use your Chinese for, in the future?

150 **Alba:** > In a job<, may be not for travelling, it's for my career.

**Researcher:** What do you have in mind in terms of career?

**Alba:** No, I don't have it. I don't have it at all, I would like to do some cultural stuff, but I don't know (0.5), I don't know. Now my focus is to get enough knowledge to be fluent. And I also left my country, I mean, I would like to try to create my life here. Once I get experience, I try to move from one thing to another, but now I don't know.

155 **Researcher:** Are you always interested in Chinese culture. You liked it from a very young age, or just notice the rise of China, and you tried to learn the language.

**Alba:** Um (1), I don't remember, because it was long time ago. I am fascinated because in China, things are moving very fast, what is going on in China is not happening in anywhere else. It is interesting to see what is happening there.

160 **Researcher:** When did you start to notice that?

**Alba:** When I was doing my undergraduate (1), everybody knew that it was happening in China in that stage.

**Researcher:** You started to learn Chinese in the first year of your university, so you chose it from the beginning?

165 **Alba:** Yes

### Appendix 3: Alba's second interview transcript

Alba's second interview      31<sup>st</sup> August 2016 (60 minutes)

**Researcher:** Why did you start learning Chinese in the first place?

5 **Alba:** First of all, Chinese is fascinating, as a language, it is different. It is a different thing, it is not like studying any other languages. The second reason is, because it is something new, not a lot of people are doing it in this stage, even today, it is still something uncommon, so you have the feeling you are doing something new. And also I knew that it will help me to find a job.

**Researcher:** Do you have a particular job in mind? What kind of job would be that?

10 **Alba:** I don't know. I don't have any ideas. But the thing is, I lived in Italy, and in Italy there are a lot of Chinese people, like, in Milan, the city where I am from, there is a China town, in some villages and towns, there are only Chinese people. You can do something about Chinese, there is a large number of them.

15 I don't know what I would like to do, to be honest. Um (0.2), maybe some, I don't know. I would like to do something that helps to connect Ireland and China more. But it can be something else, if I work in a company, they do a very good job, maybe they sell something to China, it is good to be in the trust between the country, I would do that?

**Researcher:** Your long term goal is to stay in Ireland or in Italy?

**Alba:** Ireland, definitely Ireland.

20 **Researcher:** But when you first signed up your first degree, what you wanted is to work in Italy? Because you saw a lot of Chinese people in Italy.

**Alba:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Some people would like to work in a business environment, some people would prefer to do something educational, do you have a particular area that you want to work in?

25 **Alba:** I actually don't know, at present. I know I like to study, But I can change to mind to business, but I don't know if I like to work in a private company. As I said before, it really depends on what the company does. I can work in a school teaching Chinese, but it doesn't make any impact on the relationship between China and Ireland. At present, I have no idea.

30 **Researcher:** But you are ok to be a Chinese teacher? In Ireland.

**Alba:** Definitely Ireland, it is something important to me, but teaching Chinese, I don't know. After I graduate, maybe I will accept anything, and then I will think about what is the best for me.

35 **Researcher:** You said Chinese is very important, and it will help you find a job, but how about German, German is very helpful in terms of job seeking.

**Alba:** But a lot of people can speak German.

**Researcher:** Companies are always looking for German speaker though, they never get enough people.

- 40 **Alba:** I know I just I like the idea of Chinese as a new thing to study. But German has a long tradition. Studying a language for the language sake, I mean, even though my undergraduate is about learning languages, I don't consider myself as a linguist, because studying Chinese is completely different from learning any other languages.
- I am not keen on studying other languages, like French and German, do you know what I mean.
- 45 **Researcher:** When you were asked to choose a language to specialise in, there was no question, it must be Chinese?
- Alba:** Yes, I picked it even before starting the course.
- Researcher:** How about English, how many years have you been learning English for?
- 50 **Alba:** I started learning English when I was, maybe (2). No, definitely in secondary school. I don't remember primary school, maybe something from primary school. I can't recall it.
- Researcher:** Do you think you have a talent for learning languages?
- Alba:** No.
- Researcher:** Did you pick up English easily?
- 55 **Alba:** Normal, I was normal, a normal student. I was always ok, I didn't have many problems. I wasn't the best.
- 60 But you know in Italy, the system is different from Ireland. In secondary school, you can choose (0.2). It is not you go to school and choose different subjects. It is like you go to specialised type of secondary schools, and you don't choose the subject to study, they tell you what to study. I chose a scientific secondary school, there was more Maths, Physics, Biology, Astronomy, and Latin, because Latin is like everywhere in Italy. It is like five hours per week of Latin, and we have English. But the way we studied it is like, very basic. We studied a little bit of grammar and a lot of literature, a lot of English literature.
- 65 I wasn't a very good student at high school anyway. I wasn't very focused on my study. So, I mean, I just study a bit and usually got like, we have out of ten, I got seven. But I didn't put in like, crazy effort. But the type of the course is not like incredible, you don't get out of school knowing English unless you go to the language type of high school. But I didn't do it.
- 70 **Researcher:** What is the difference?
- Alba:** They focus on languages, they study like three languages, so of course they know language more than someone who studied in a scientific school.
- 75 I didn't know I want to do languages when I was at high school, but later I realised I wanted to do it. But then, after I went to university, many people went to a language high school before so their English level was higher than me. And also because they travelled, they had a semester abroad in the UK, I didn't have a change to do all those things. But I ended up getting very good marks because I studied very very hard.
- 80 But I mean, I can definitely see my English level improved since I have come to Ireland because everything I study from books, they start to make sense. I am very happy with my level of English.

- Researcher:** When you were doing your first degree, your English was not good, how about at the end of the degree, do you think you were better than most of them?
- Alba:** I got very good mark.
- Researcher:** Better than the majority?
- 85 **Alba:** You know the problem with English in my undergraduate is, the level of English is very high, very very high. It is like they start from a very high level. So it is difficult to say. I definitely have very very good mark, but a lot other people may also have very very good mark, but maybe they have to do less effort than me, because they had English before, they got better English when they started. So it is just that, the level
- 90 was very very high, it is the tricky thing.
- I got very good mark in Chinese as well, and actually I performed better in Chinese than in English, because in Chinese we started from scratch. So, it was really what you studied in university that matter. But with my English course, or 'European Experiences', and so on and so forth, we did a lot of viva, exams in Italy. They said: 'I can see you study a lot, but you are not fluent, you just say what you learned from the book'. I don't know how to say it.
- 95
- Researcher:** The examiners said that?
- Alba:** Yes. They said: 'I know you study a lot, but we want you to know the language, you know the expressions'. But I don't know where I can learn them, I have never been to
- 100 places that speak English.
- One of my classmates in my undergraduate, he studied languages in her undergraduate, in high school. He also lived in America, so he just knew how to speak. You know, that is just the kind of situation.
- Researcher:** You think you are good at English just because you work hard, it is not because English comes very natural to you?
- 105
- Alba:** I don't know, it is very difficult to say because the situation in my university was so peculiar, and I worked so hard. I don't know, if I don't know.....It is ok for me to learn a language, it is nothing like a nightmare. And also people who are considered as talented, maybe they just study more, or they got immersion before. But now, I
- 110 definitely consider myself having good English. I always got compliments from native speakers.
- Researcher:** Did you have this kind of confidence in Italy?
- Alba:** No, no!
- Researcher:** You just practise in Ireland?
- 115 **Alba:** The point is, in Italy the level was, nobody in the exam will get the maximum. If it was 30, you will get 21, 22, and you will say 'Wow'. Because the level is so high, you can never get to the maximum.
- But when I did my IELTS, I did very well, I got 7.5. But of course I had to study as well. So, I am more confident, and now I am very confident with my level of English.
- 120 **Researcher:** And it all began in Ireland.
- Alba:** Yes, and I started to practise it.

**Researcher:** But you have only lived in Ireland for a year.

**Alba:** No, two years now.

**Researcher:** You came here one year before the course started?

125 **Alba:** Yes, exactly, exactly!

**Researcher:** Why did you come to Ireland.

**Alba:** For a combination of things as well, because I always want to further my education, but I didn't have a way to do it. When I finished my undergraduate, I had been working for a family, no, a girl. I was given tuition, and helped her with the subjects that she was doing. So they moved to Ireland, and I had to move with them.

130 **Researcher:** So you were a tutor?

**Alba:** The idea is to help her with her homework. I wasn't really teaching.

**Researcher:** Learning Chinese wasn't one of the reasons that you came to Ireland at that time?

**Alba:** No, no.

135 **Researcher:** How did you know about the master's degree that you are currently doing now?

**Alba:** I applied for a course in the Netherlands, you know Leidan, Leidan university, because it is like the hub of Chinese studies.

**Researcher:** When was it?

**Alba:** A few months before I applied for this university. April was the deadline. I started to work on my application here in January. But then I got accepted by Leidan University, but the problem is, I didn't consider all the thing, I didn't want to move again, from Italy to Ireland, from Ireland to the Netherlands, I didn't feel like doing it. So, let's see if this college does the same type of course, and there was, so I applied for the course and I got accepted.

140 **Researcher:** So you had Chinese in mind already at that time?

**Alba:** Yes, because I studied Chinese in my undergraduate, and it was the only option for me.

**Researcher:** Then you did an IELTS course as well?

**Alba:** Yes, because to apply for any kind of courses taught in English, you have to get IELTS. I did it first for the Netherlands, because I didn't know I would apply for this university. But I need it for this university as well, there is no escape.

150 **Researcher:** Are you happy with, or unhappy with the college.

**Alba:** No, no. It doesn't mean it is perfect, but it suits me. I wouldn't be able to move and start another adventure, I wouldn't be able to mentally to do it. So, this course suits me. There is something I am not happy with, but overall I am very happy with it.

155 **Researcher:** Which level do you want to reach in term of Chinese?

**Alba:** I want to be fluent.

**Researcher:** You want to be as fluent as you do in English, or better, or lower?

- Alba:** Um::
- 160 **Researcher:** If you got 7.5 in IELTS, if there is an exam that has the same scale, what score would be your target?
- Alba:** I don't know, because Chinese is much more difficult, you know. I mean, I would be happy with, like, I am going abroad, I am going there tomorrow (the interview happened just the day before the interviewee set off for her study trip to China), I need to be fluent, so I can communicate in Chinese, and I can work with Chinese people. And I can see a lot of people in Ireland they don't have the level of English that I have, and they can work, I would be happy with that level of Chinese for the moment. I want to graduate with that level of Chinese, and then afterward I can, you know, sometimes, keep studying. But once I have the level that enables me to work with Chinese people and communicate with them, I will be happy.
- 165
- 170
- Researcher:** Are you planning to do HSK?
- Alba:** I am considering to do it.
- Researcher:** You did it before?
- Alba:** I did HSK 4, but I did it without knowing what to expect. I was really ready when I did it. I failed by one mark in the level four exam.
- 175
- Researcher:** Just by one mark?
- Alba:** Yes, it was really disappointing. I studied for one week, but I didn't consider. I thought level four was my level, but I didn't consider the characters in the exam were not the characters that I had studied. I mean, we didn't follow the HSK, it was like starting from scratch, a thousand words, it wasn't possible in one week, you know. A lot of them, I knew them, but maybe I studied 'bed' instead of 'bell'. So I didn't know what to expect, I tried my best but I couldn't do it.
- 180
- Alba:** And also listening, the thing that I am worst is listening. There was a big part in listening, I really focused on it in the exam, but I didn't finish the writing part, which is my best part out of four. I was so focused on..... Writing should be the part that I focused on.
- 185
- Researcher:** You didn't know what you would be tested on?
- Alba:** I knew, but I just started looking at it the week before.
- Researcher:** When was that? You were in Italy?
- 190 **Alba:** No, I was here, it was before I applied for this university.
- Researcher:** Why did you take the exam?
- Alba:** The Leidan University asked me to have HSK 4, but even though I didn't get it, they accepted me, because my professor from Italy wrote a letter and told them I was that level.
- 195 **Researcher:** I remember you told me that you would like to become fluent in these two years. What did you give yourself a two-year deadline?
- Alba:** Because I need to find a job £, I am not learning the language just for its own sake.
- Researcher:** Do you think you will continue studying Chinese after this course?



200 **Alba:** Yes, I think you always need to improve it, you know, in any language. I will be happy to study, especially if I find a course, or something, a way to study and it works, and yes, definitely.

**Researcher:** Hypothetically speaking, if you come back from China and there are some high level courses provided by the Confucius Institute, would you sign up a course there?

**Alba:** I studied in the Confucius Institute before. I have done a lot of things (1). It was nice.

205 **Researcher:** You were in Ireland at that time?

**Alba:** Yes.

**Researcher:** What level did you do?

**Alba:** Intermediate level, and they have a lot of levels. It was ok, because the girl was very good, she was very good at teaching, and she knew what she was doing. But there was just one night per week. So, I don't know, I don't know what I am going to do to keep improving.

210 **Researcher:** How long was the class?

**Alba:** Just one month and a half.

**Researcher:** That short?

215 **Alba:** Yes, because when I called them, it had been started.

**Researcher:** When was it?

**Alba:** When I arrived in Ireland.

**Researcher:** When you first arrived, then you booked the course straight away?

**Alba:** Yes.

220 **Researcher:** Very committed.

**Alba:** (Laugh).

**Researcher:** Intermediate is the highest that had?

**Alba:** No, they had more levels.

**Researcher:** But you didn't keep going?

225 **Alba:** No, because I didn't have the time.

**Researcher:** How about your opinions about the Chinese class here. You weren't very happy in the first term, how about now.

**Alba:** The situation of homework changed. I think that my Chinese teacher really wanted me to improve, so she is the type of person: 'can you do this can you do that'.

230 I don't know, I just. There is something, I mean. How can I say it (2).  
First of all, the level of Chinese in the class, the people are different. They come from different situations, so we are not at the same level. So we don't know the same things. This is the problem.

**Researcher:** But they split the class.

235 **Alba:** Yes, but still, in the same situation, we didn't do the same course in the undergraduate, we don't have the same situation. It is not someone's fault, it is just the situation. And in fact, I am looking forward to going to Beijing (where the interviewee's host university is located), because I know I will definitely go to the level that suits me, and we are going to focus on Chinese.

240 **Researcher:** How many hours of Chinese did you have in the term per week?

**Alba:** Four.

**Researcher:** You have a conversation class as well?

**Alba:** Yes, two hours per week.

**Researcher:** What kind of homework did the teacher give you?

245 **Alba:** Writing some paragraphs, we have some kind of paragraph examples.

**Researcher:** Every week?

**Alba:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Anything else?

**Alba:** No, that's it.

250 **Researcher:** Do you think it is enough?

**Alba:** Um:: No, I don't think so.

**Researcher:** What kind of homework do you want? Vocab, listening?

**Alba:** He told us to listen to some, like, there is a book, there is some conversation of this book on the internet. But if you just listen without anything to do, or answering some

255 **Researcher:** Do you want more homework?

**Alba:** Yes, could be more.

**Researcher:** You did quite a bit of listening as well in the class?

**Alba:** We didn't do a lot of listening in the class, we just did a bit of preparation for the test, that's it.

260 **Researcher:** Just towards the end of the term.....

**Alba:** Just a week before the end of the term, we did HSK tests, like some samples. He said we needed to do some listening at home.

**Researcher:** Do you think your Chinese has improved since you started this course?

265 **Alba:** Um::, no.

**Researcher:** Even the teaching has improved in the second term and you had some homework, they don't help you?

**Alba:** I learned something, but I wouldn't say my Chinese has improved.

**Researcher:** Why?

- 270 **Alba:** I think it is a mix of thing, like the level of the class, me and my classmates are at different levels. I mean, to write those paragraphs, I didn't need to make a lot of effort, some effort, not very big effort.
- 275 There is something, or, or, yea, and something in the course, and I think it is the way the course is designed. It is not designed to improve your Chinese, just something to do with Chinese, but the reason, the target is not clear to achieve. It is not we are focused on a certain level, like level A to level B, it is just, we do something.
- 280 When you do the IELTS exam, you have a clear goal, you do things and you keep comparing those things as well. You need 7 and you are 6.5, and you know where you are going, because you have a goal, but this course has no clear goal to achieve. I mean, we studied things but we don't go to specific place. At the end, we did this HSK preparation of the listening, that was with a clear goal, but it was just in the last week.
- Researcher:** Do you bring you some disappointment?
- 285 **Alba:** I still don't know, I think in some way it is better, because if there were a lot of Chinese to study, I wouldn't be able to focus on other courses. And it would be difficult to do everything. And I know that there is a semester abroad that I will only study Chinese.
- Researcher:** So you are ok with it?
- 290 **Alba:** Yes, I am ok with it because we are going to China. I will be focused on that. I will be going to Beijing University, the level will be very high, very strict.
- Researcher:** Do you have a placement test for your study trip?
- Alba:** Yes.
- Researcher:** So you know which level you are going already?
- Alba:** No, I will do it in there.
- 295 **Researcher:** You didn't have any time abroad in your first degree?
- Alba:** No. Because I didn't have the money to go.
- Researcher:** You don't have some Erasmus programmes?
- Alba:** Yes, but still, you need the money for the flight, your accommodation?
- Researcher:** It is not covered by your home university?
- 300 **Alba:** They pay your tuition fees but you pay for your own flight, and there was a way to go to China, with a scholarship offered by the Chinese government. But if I was going there, I couldn't work. Because I also worked.
- Researcher:** So you were always working at college?
- Alba:** Yes, give tuition to two or three students, so If I went, I wouldn't be able to earn money.
- 305 **Researcher:** This is the first time you will go to a country related to your target language, with some formal learning.
- Alba:** Yes.

- 310 **Researcher:** How about the Confucius Institute, you studied there before, did it help you improve your Chinese level.
- Alba:** (Thinking) No (laughed), I wouldn't say that, I learned, the same situation, I learned something. It was very structured. The girl was very good, but with every week one to two hours of Chinese, you won't improve, you learned something.
- Researcher:** But you are happy with it?
- 315 **Alba:** Yes, yes.
- Researcher:** What is your expectation of the trip to China?
- Alba:** I don't know, because it is the first time that I go to China. I think it will be very intense. I hope that in my action, my Chinese language will really help to, to really use all the thing I learn in this year. Because I know them, it is just so difficult to take them out. They are there, but I never use it. I also want to see the level I have already flourish and improve. This is my expectation.
- 320 **Researcher:** Will you have Chinese classes when you come back?
- Alba:** No, because I did Chinese three and Chinese four already, so I won't have Chinese. Maybe I will have some conversation class.
- 325 **Researcher:** But nothing is official?
- Alba:** No. In May.....seems no. I don't know what will happen next year.
- Researcher:** Can you tell me what learning Chinese means to you? Can you tell me a few words?
- Alba:** Um, I mean, at this moment, it is difficult to answer, because my real learning is not happening at this stage of my life. I studied very hard in my undergraduate, and then like what I did after, is not really learning. At this moment, it is like it is frozen, my learning of Chinese. It is not really part of my life. What I have been doing is not really learning for me, I learned something but it is not like learning and studying and having exams and something like that, it is difficult to answer. But it is definitely my goal, my most important goal.
- 330 **Researcher:** Do you think your Chinese is getting worse?
- Alba:** The problem with Chinese is, if you don't practise it, you will forget things. I forgot a lot, but if I am confident, if I refresh, they will come back to me. But definitely I can write at this moment, but this is the way Chinese is.
- Researcher:** Hypothetically speaking, if I give you a HSK 4 exam next week, do you think you can pass it this time?
- 340 **Alba:** Yes (assertive), but just because I know how to do the exam.
- Researcher:** So it has nothing to do with your Chinese level?
- Alba:** No (laughed with embarrassment).
- Researcher:** You don't think your Chinese has got worse?
- 345 **Alba:** No, but frozen. I really need to refresh it. This is how I think.
- Researcher:** How many hours of Chinese classes will you have in China?

**Alba:** At least 18, compulsory.

**Researcher:** And you will have something else?

350 **Alba:** Homework, Chinese teachers are very keen on giving you homework. Then I will have two modules.

**Researcher:** Are the modules conducted in Chinese?

**Alba:** No.

**Researcher:** If I would like to ask you to write down your motivational change over the years, you did a four year Master's degree in Italy.....

355 **Alba:** No, only three?

**Researcher:** I thought it was always four in continental Europe.

**Alba:** No, because we do two-year masters', there is no one-year masters' in Italy. So it is three plus two.

**Researcher:** Did you do anything for your Chinese in the summer, do you have any time to do it?

360 **Alba:** I have language exchange with a girl.

**Researcher:** Does it help?

**Alba:** I don't know.

**Researcher:** If I would like you to rate on a zero to ten, how has your motivation changed throughout the years.

365 **Alba:** In the beginning of my undergraduate, it was ten, and 2012, I was ten, 2013, mainly eight, then 2014, seven.

**Researcher:** How about at the time that you were in the Confucius Institute?

**Alba:** It was the same time, 2014, I came here to work, and wrote my thesis, and went to the Confucius Institute.

370 **Researcher:** So se[ven

**Alba:** Yes], seven, aw maybe six point five. It is the same moment, before 2015. Then six, in the beginning of the course.

In April, 7. Now I really want to learn Chinese, it is eight. Maybe no, maybe I would put nine.

375 **Researcher:** Why was it ten in the beginning, and then it dropped to eight?

**Alba:** There was a very good Chinese teacher, but she was pregnant, then we had another teacher, but she just knew Chinese.

**Researcher:** So it dropped?

**Alba:** Yes, and then I didn't have a very good Chinese score.

380 **Researcher:** But you took initiative to go to the Confucius Institute.

**Alba:** Because I really want to learn, but I didn't really feel that I was learning. It was just a.....maybe it was 7.5 when I enrolled in the course.

**Researcher:** Before going to this university, even when you were applying for the degree, you were not motivated?

385 **Alba:** Because I was focused on the bureaucratic things.

**Researcher:** How about the exam, the HSK 4? What was your motivation at that time?

**Alba:** I will leave this.

**Researcher:** Then it just keeps dropping.

**Alba:** Yes, because I don't see good structure, I don't see the goal, I don't learn.

390 **Researcher:** Did you do any conversation exchange in the first term?

**Alba:** No.

**Researcher:** Because the course improved a bit so you were more motivated?

**Alba:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Did the girl from the conversation exchange make you become more motivated?

395 **Alba:** No, it is just because I am looking forward to China, and because I was working, and I was sick of my job, I didn't like it, so I was really looking forward to the trip to China.

## Appendix 4: Alba's third interview transcript

### Alba's third interview 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017 (20 minutes)

**Researcher:** Did you learn Chinese after you came back from Beijing?

5 **Alba:** Yes, I did, I study on my own, um (0.2), I bought some books from Beijing for HSK 4, I um::, I just study on my own.

**Researcher:** Do you have a clearer idea about what you want to do after graduation?

**Alba:** I don't have any idea what I want to do, ar (1), after my graduation I have no idea, but I really hope I can find::, a JOB, where there is some Chinese invol:ved, like even a little part, I hope so.

10 **Researcher:** How was your learning experience in China?

**Alba:** They put me in a wrong level.

**Researcher:** Did you ask them to give put you in the right one?

15 **Alba:** Yes but I failed. You know in Chi:na, > it is very difficult if they put you in something it is very difficult to change so I didn't manage to change <. They put me in a (1), kind of, it is almost a basic level. I mean, the people, I was one of the best of my class because it was easy. But I mean, people of my class were kind of between HSK level 3 and going to HSK 4, the level after that was pre-intermediate, but if I was in that class, I would understand what it was doing.

**Researcher:** So you were not happy with the learning environment?

20 **Alba:** NO, I am happy with the classes. The teachers were amazing, really really really incredible, very committed, all the classes were well prepared, we followed the book, and we did a lot of exercises in the class with structure, we did a lot of presentation, it was very well organised, it was amazing!

**Researcher:** How many class hours did you have every week?

25 **Alba:** I had three types of classes, I had *Han Yu* (means the Chinese language in Mandarin Chinese), I had *Kou Yu* (means Spoken Chinese in Mandarin Chinese) and the listening. So I had four hours for the listening, and I think I had six hours for *Han Yu* and six hours in *Kou Yu*, something like that, I don't really remember, but I think every day we had classes, there was not a single day that I didn't have classes. I think  
30 I had six hours every day.

- Researcher:** Do you think your Chinese has improved a lot since you have come back from China?
- Alba:** Um (1), yes, I think so, absolutely. I have become more confident in my Chinese and I feel more relax as well. I think my listening improved a lot. Even my spoken (1), I mean, my level is not high, but as I said, I have become more confident when I say it, if you know what I mean.
- 35
- Researcher:** Yes, I do. So, do you have any plan on taking a Chinese exam in the near future?
- Alba:** I just did HSK 4 in May, and I am going to do HSK 5, maybe next March, because I know in Ireland there is an exam in March, March and November. So I am thinking about March to do HSK, or November, let's see.
- 40
- Researcher:** Did you pass HSK 4?
- Alba:** Yes, £ I did.
- Researcher:** In our first interview, you said you would like to take your Chinese to a certain level. Do you think you have achieved the goal you set for yourself?
- Alba:** NO! Unfortunately no, there is no way I am at the level that I wanted to be. I think I kind of have an intermediate level, but not all my skills are at the same level, so (1) like I think reading, recognising characters is the thing that I am best. But listening is still tricky, you know, listening is a bit tricky, and speaking can be tricky as well.
- 45
- Researcher:** Can you tell me about your motivation level in the past few months, on a scale from zero to ten?
- 50
- Alba:** When I first arrived China, maybe ten, in the middle of the course (2), eight, or maybe seven, because they put me in the wrong level, so that wasn't nice. Before I left China, I think it was, because (2), no, maybe in the middle of the course, maybe eight, and before I went back to China, seven. When I was back, six, and now, is seven again.
- Researcher:** Why sometimes your motivation was higher, and sometimes it was lower.
- 55
- Alba:** I think the problem was they put me in the wrong level. Sometimes I was feeling stuck, because I wasn't learning as much as I could do if they would put me in the right level. And I think it was better if I was put in a level where I was more challenged so I could learn more in a shorter period of time, and probably my motivation would change (0.3).
- 60
- I mean, it was very intense, the course, and I like it, but the pollution was something that was really impacting my energy level, I have the feeling that if I was in a better kind of environment, in terms of health, it would have been easier for me to do what I



65 aimed, in the class I would do everything, but in some way. But you know, I had left at some point, I have stopped going to the cinema with some Chinese friends, because it took me 40 minutes to go to the cinema, and 40 minutes to come back. Sometime if there was something that took me extra effort to improve my Chinese, I didn't do it because it is so tiring to do anything it.

**Researcher:** Do you sometimes imagine what you were using your Chinese for in the future?

70 **Alba:** Um (1), you know sometimes I had some pictures in my head, but maybe they changed, but the problem is I don't really know, because my level of Chinese is not like, I am not fluent yet, and in some way, it is difficult to picture yourself using Chinese because you don't feel if I would be of any help to the company with my level of Chinese that I have, so I really don't know.

**Researcher:** I think this is it. Thank you very much for your help! Hope you enjoy the rest of your course.

75

**Alba:** No worries, my pleasure!

## Appendix 5: Sarah's first interview

### Sarah first interview (40 minutes)

- Researcher:** I have heard that learning Irish is a dreadful experience, a lot of people lost confidence in learning language because of their Irish learning experience, does it apply to you
- 5 **Sarah:** Yes, it did, up until I was 16 years old. Learning Irish in primary school was not a good experience. It was taught very badly. The first part of the secondary school was taught very badly, but I had a very good teacher for the last couple years in secondary school. She turned it into a living language as opposed to just reading and writing. She also did a lot of speaking classes, which is really good. I also like Irish a lot more after
- 10 I went to Irish college for three weeks when I was about 15. So you gos and just speak Irish, and you live with the Irish family in the west of Ireland.
- Researcher:** Did you do it on your own accord, or you were obliged to do it?
- Sarah:** It is a very common thing for Irish teenagers to go to Irish college, some people go every summer, they go for three weeks, you go to the class every morning and you stay with the Irish family, you only speak Irish.
- 15 **Researcher:** Why do people hate Irish but at the same time they are willing to go to Irish college?
- Sarah:** I think it is not that everyone hates Irish, >it is part of your culture<, but it is just taught badly. I think everybody would like to speak Irish well, but it is just not taught very well.
- 20 **Researcher:** Before you met the very good teacher, you chose to go to Irish college, why?
- Sarah:** It was not for learning the language, it was for the fun three weeks away from home.
- Researcher:** Did it change your opinion about Irish.
- Sarah:** ↑Ye:s, definitely. I think if you are immersed in the culture where the language is from, which is supposed to be the whole Ireland, but it is not.
- 25 **Researcher:** Would you say before you were 16, you didn't have confidence in learning a new language, or you just didn't have the confidence in Irish?
- Sarah:** Just Irish, I am quite good at languages. I was learning French between 14 and 17. And I lo::ve French, and I love learning it. I would have been more confidence in speaking French than I would have been confident in speaking Irish.
- 30 **Researcher:** What other languages do you speak?
- Sarah:** I can speak some Chinese, I can speak a lot of French, and a little bit of Irish.
- Researcher:** Does your French and Irish learning experience help you pick up Chinese?
- Sarah:** Yes, they probably have helped me to pick up Chinese
- Researcher:** In what way?
- 35 **Sarah:** I guess learning a language you have to think differently. From learning both French and Irish, they have different structures for sentences. So (0.2), I didn't find that daunting while learning Chinese. So, it probably makes me easier to adapt.

- Researcher:** What made you sign up for the master's degree? Is it for the language? Or you are really into China?
- 40 **Sarah:** a bit of both, mainly for the language. Because I have been trying to learn (0.5) I lived in Hong Kong for one and a half years, previous to that I have been trying to learn Chinese, not Cantonese, Putonghua. I am always interested in Chinese culture as well (1.0) it is also a big part of it. I am not sure which one is bigger to be honest. There are several motivations for taking this course.
- 45 **Researcher:** I suppose it is a big step for you to take a master's degree rather than just take a language class. Why are you so committed? What makes you different from most people who only want to know a bit of the language?
- Sarah:** I worked previously as a manager of an art gallery. But I am not able to find the same work in Ireland, in the future I would like to do something about Chinese art, so I would like to be able to talk to people about Chinese art, in Chinese! And I would like to be able to put together exhibitions, to be able to do that, I need to have the knowledge of Chinese culture and to be able to speak the language.
- 50 **Researcher:** what was the job involved?
- Sarah:** I was a manager and a curator of a gallery
- 55 **Researcher:** In Hong Kong?
- Sarah:** No, that was in London.
- Researcher:** Before you went to Hong Kong or after?
- Sarah:** After, just last year (2014).
- Researcher:** You were a curator in an art gallery in London, what was your first degree?
- 60 **Sarah:** Fine art. The course is actually called visual art and practice. Learning how to be a practical artist.
- Researcher:** Have you been in 'the industry' since you have finished your degree?
- Sarah:** The last time I put on an exhibition was 2014.
- Researcher:** Have you left the industry?
- 65 **Sarah:** Yes, because I am in college. I am now working in the art gallery, but just part time.
- Researcher:** Was the 2014 exhibition about Chinese or China?
- Sarah:** No
- Researcher:** Were there any exhibitions that you put up involved China or Chinese culture?
- Sarah:** An exhibition in 2013 was looking at Edward Snowden's trip to Hong Kong, it is about Chinese politics, global politics really. I also used some Chinese characters. It wasn't about China, but in China, Hong Kong, it was in Shek Kip Mei (the place where the art-centre is located), JCCAC (Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre).
- 70 **Researcher:** You were in Hong Kong. What did you do in Hong Kong?

- 75 Sarah: I was an English teacher for a year, and I was an artist for another year..... Have you been to JCCAC? It is um it got a lot of funding and stuff, they can put on an exhibition.
- Researcher:** No (0.5), I can't quite believe that you can survive as an artist in Hong Kong
- Sarah:** Because the English teaching job paid me so much, and I can save up lots of money and I could live off it.
- 80 **Researcher:** Can I say, you want to do something about arts with knowledge about Chinese culture and language, and this is your major motivation for signing up the course. Can I put it this way?
- Sarah:** Yes
- Researcher:** Has your plan changed since then. Or has it grown even stronger?
- 85 **Sarah:** I am thinking (0,3), maybe I can work in the tourist industry in Ireland, because it seems to be growing, there are a lot of opportunities.
- Researcher:** What made you change [your plan?]
- Sarah:** [I haven't changed my plan], but to work as a curator putting on exhibitions working in Ireland, it is a very narrow, small aim to have (0.5), I just widen my aim a little bit.
- 90 **Researcher:** You want to stay in Ireland upon graduation?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** So you are looking for other opportunities?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** How about your Chinese name? Can you tell me more about it?
- 95 **Sarah:** 可以呀< ! £我叫(Sarah is speaking Chinese, the sentence means: Yes, I can my name is.....her Chinese name and the etymology of it are omitted because it is identifiable information). I took it from 艾未未 (Ai wei wei, an outspoken Chinese artist who are constantly under the monitor of the Chinese government).
- Researcher:** Aw, very interesting (0.5). So you identify yourself with an artist.
- 100 **Sarah:** Yes
- Researcher:** When did you chose this name?
- Sarah:** This Chinese name? A couple of months ago, in our class (0,3), with our lecture of Chinese Linguistics. But I have another Chinese name before I went to Hong Kong.
- Researcher:** Did he make every one of you choose a Chinese name?
- 105 **Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Do other people know your Chinese name? Other than the people in Asian Studies?
- Sarah:** No.
- Researcher:** How did people respond when they knew that you are learning Chinese, and very committed to it.?

- 110 **Sarah:** I guess people think you are a bit ↑MAD! Or, why are you doing that? Because everyone thinks Chinese is a very difficult language. But it is not that hard though.
- Researcher:** You think Chinese is not a difficult language?
- Sarah:** Not that hard (1). Um::I have to keep telling me that.
- 115 **Researcher:** How much more difficult is Chinese compared with French?
- Sarah:** About (0.5) 80% more difficult.
- Researcher:** How about comparing it with Irish?
- Sarah:** About 60% more difficult.=No! Maybe the same.
- Researcher:** Have you come across any situation where you want to give up? From the day that you start learning the language (1) When did you start learning Chinese?
- 120 **Sarah:** I started about 5 years ago. But it was very basic, you know you have to stop when life gets in the way when you have a full-time job.=But no, I >'ve never thought< of giving up learning.
- Researcher:** Why did you decide to learn Chinese in the first place?
- 125 **Sarah:** I was interested in the characters, and the formation of the characters. So, >from the aesthetic point of view<, I became interested in Chinese, so I started learning it when I finished college. I think it is a beautiful language, especially the traditional characters.
- Researcher:** So the characters intrigue you first?
- Sarah:** =Yes.
- 130 **Researcher:** You thought it was a very beautiful language, but how long did it take you from that point to take action to learn the language?
- Sarah:** About a year.
- Researcher:** Do you remember what happened that year.
- Sarah:** That year, I just finished my degree (0.5). I am interested in languages anyway (1) I did two courses with the Confucius institute. And I liked it.
- 135 **Researcher:** In Ireland?
- Sarah:** Yes
- Researcher:** When was your first encounter of Chinese?
- Sarah:** I have a friend from Singapore in 2009. I think it is how it happened.
- 140 **Researcher:** How long was your course with the Confucius Institute?
- Sarah:** About 3 month each (0.3) Perhaps it was the 'double happiness character' (she refers to the character '喜喜', this character is formed by two '喜', which means happiness, in Chinese culture, people often double it up to form '喜喜' to emphasise how delightful the events are at celebrations, especially at weddings). My friend wrote it
- 145 down for me, it's really nice, nice symmetry.
- Researcher:** After 6 months of learning Chinese, then you stopped.

**Sarah:** I moved to China

**Researcher:** For work?

150 **Sarah:** I left Ireland and I went travelling in China for about 3 months, then I went to Hong Kong.

**Researcher:** Then, London?

**Sarah:** No, China, then Hong Kong, back home, then Hong Kong, then Home, then London, then home, then the present day.

**Researcher:** The time that you really learned Chinese is those 6 months.

155 **Sarah:** Yes (0.3), but I did an exchange in Hong Kong for a year with a Mandarin teacher, a language exchange. So I taught her French and she taught me Chinese.

**Researcher:** You saw her in person or saw her online?

**Sarah:** In person, about once or twice a week. She (the Mandarin teacher in Hong Kong) emphasised a lot on the tones, that was good.

160 **Researcher:** Was it a good experience?

**Sarah:** Yes

**Researcher:** It started from 2009, you met your Singaporean friend, then you became interested in the language, and decided to learn it in 2010, 2011? Right?

**Sarah:** Yes

165 **Researcher:** I would like you to plot a line graph to indicate your change in motivation

**Sarah:** (Plotting the graph).....In 2011, my motivation was pretty high (1).

**Researcher:** In 2015 when the master's degree started, you were very motivated compared with it now. Why is it like that?

**Sarah:** It is because it is structured (1). It is probably the last education that I will be doing.

170 **Researcher:** How about the Mandarin class and teacher?

**Sarah:** Who is going to listen to this?

**Researcher:** Only two of us

**Sarah:** Very disappointing, ve::ry DISAPPOINTING! Not a real teacher, so that was all very disappointing for last year (0.5) But we (the students in the master's degree programme) were all very busy doing History, Politics and Linguistics, so we didn't have time to think about the language class really, but pretty bad.

175 **Researcher:** In what aspects?

**Sarah:** Any good language class I have done, people speak Chinese. But in last year's (2015) class, there was not too much Chinese being spoken in the class. It was all being conducted in English. We all had some basic Chinese already, so we would be able to understand some basic Chinese commands in Chinese, but it was all spoken in Chinese, so we couldn't improve our listening skills at all.

180 **Researcher:** So you want it to be [taught]

- Sarah:** =↑[Through Chinese].
- 185 **Researcher:** Just like the way Irish people teaching us English?
- Sarah:** Yes, that is how you learn (h)! You don::'t learn by someone speaking English to you, you learn by someone speaking Chinese to you.
- Researcher:** Anything else other than the medium of instruction?
- Sarah:** It is generally not organised at all, no structure in the class, no textbooks.
- 190 **Researcher:** How about this term?
- Sarah:** It is slightly better, um::in terms of speaking Chinese. Because during the meeting, there were a few complaints.
- Researcher:** What kind of meeting?
- 195 **Sarah:** There was a course meeting (0.5) I specifically said to the teacher: pl:ease speak Chinese in the class. So he speaks more now, and we have a course book.
- Researcher:** Who attended the meeting?
- Sarah:** The staff, teachers and our class rep.
- Researcher:** It happened in this year?
- 200 **Sarah:** Yes, when the new term has just started. It is good to have a book, you can study at home, do the homework.
- Researcher:** When you said he is not a good teacher, what did it mean?
- Sarah:** He doesn't have any experience of teaching a language, he is JUST a PhD student. Like if you went to a language school, people would have been trained to be a teacher. And they would be able to teach you the language.
- 205 **Researcher:** You can tell he is not trained?
- Sarah:** =DEFINITELY! I taught English for years, I know how the class is supposed to be structured.
- Researcher:** Your motivation is still pretty high. So the teaching environment doesn't affect you a lot?
- 210 **Sarah:** It does, even if it is just structured and you have to go to the class.
- Researcher:** At least it doesn't dampen your enthusiasm?
- Sarah:** Yes (2), um:: a little bit (h) (1). But I definitely SO:: <want to learn Chinese>!
- Researcher:** How about the people in the class?
- Sarah:** They all agree with me.
- 215 **Researcher:** I suppose you didn't have time in the last term, but how about this term. Are you doing some language exchange?
- Sarah:** Yes, I am doing language exchange. And I am doing an extra class on Thursday night, and the teacher is amazing.
- Researcher:** Is any of your good friends learning Chinese?

220 **Sarah:** No, no one is remotely interested in it.  
**Researcher:** Does your boyfriend speak more than one languages?  
**Sarah:** No, none, just English.  
**Researcher:** Is your interest in languages ignited by your parents?  
**Sarah:** No

225 **Researcher:** Is anyone from your close social circle interested in languages as well?  
**Sarah:** Yes, some of them do, just not Chinese. Um:, I have a friend from Hong Kong, she speaks Chinese, but we just talk like once a year, so she is not really a good friend, I suppose. But just because she lives so far away.  
**Researcher:** I think this is it, but can I have another interview with you before you go to China?

230 **Sarah:** Of course  
**Researcher:** Thank you very much  
**Sarah:** Mei Guanxi (沒關係in Chinese characters, means no problem).



Appendix 6 Sarah's second interview transcript

Sarah's second interview July 2016 (45 minutes)

- Researcher:** You are very busy now? You are working full time?
- Sarah:** Mo::re than full time.
- Researcher:** Do you have time to revise what you have learned during the term?
- 5 **Sarah:** No, I am working six days a week.
- Researcher:** So you don't have time to do anything about your Chinese?
- Sarah:** No, >I have a Chinese book in my back though<. So I have the intention of revising.
- Researcher:** How do you travel, do you take the bus?
- Sarah:** No, I cycle.
- 10 **Researcher:** Do you have chances to look at your book?
- Sarah:** No. It was a bank holiday yesterday, so I did. I have a look at it yesterday and Sunday at home. Just voca, nouns.
- Researcher:** I would like to ask you something about the first term of your master's degree first. I remember you weren't very happy with the first time, is there a particular moment, or event, or a teaching style that made you unhappy?
- 15 **Sarah:** I think the teacher's own opinions were expressed too:: freely, instead of teaching us about language, he was teaching us about the culture in which they grew up as they see it. But obviously it is only one person's perspective but not actually representative of Chinese culture.
- 20 **Researcher:** OK, I remember you got the idea of your Chinese name from Ai wei-wei (a Chinese artist who has been under house-arrest for being out-spoken on political issues), do you think your perspective on Chinese culture is very different from the teacher's?
- Sarah:** Um (0.5), maybe, it is just a personality thing. Yes, we have very different views on live in general, not just Chinese cultures.
- 25 **Researcher:** I remember he played quite a lot of videos in the beginning.
- Sarah:** Yes, it was very good, very good.
- Researcher:** That part was good? So which part was not good?
- Sarah:** Speaking in English about Chinese culture or, personal experiences of himself or someone has had in China is NOT, it has nothing to do with language a language, it is just English, there was no learning there at all .
- 30 **Researcher:** How about the second term?
- Sarah:** It was much better, improved a lot, more professional, more organised.
- Researcher:** Which part are you particularly happy with?
- Sarah:** He had a book, that was very good, we should have it from the start, and we have a book as a reference and there is a structure in the class. It is good, structure is very important.
- 35

- Researcher:** Did he not give you anything such as handouts or worksheets for you to revise at home in the first term.
- Sarah:** Sporadically.
- 40 **Researcher:** At regular intervals?
- Sarah:** Irregular intervals (angry tone).
- Researcher:** Anything other than the book?
- Sarah:** And then, any videos that we watched, I think they were very good, very well done. I learned a lot from them.
- 45 **Researcher:** What kind of videos were they?
- Sarah:** We watched situation dramas.
- Researcher:** Were they about language learning? Just like what we can see on BBC learning English?
- Sarah:** Yes (h), they are fun, not high art, but they help you learn the language.
- 50 **Researcher:** Do you expect a Chinese teacher to teach in the same way that you teach English.
- Sarah:** Um (0.5) Yes. I am not an English teacher now. But (2), well, I was teaching children, little kids, very different. I haven't taught adults English, so it is totally different learning style, so there is no comparison.
- Researcher:** I remember you said in the first interview, you didn't specify, but you want to do something about art. But you think it is too [narrow]
- 55 **Sarah:** [Yes], >I want to work in the Chester Beatty Library<.
- Researcher:** This is your goal?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** What would be your role?
- 60 **Sarah:** Organising events, around the work that they have that. Like, they have a lot of work from the Middle East, from China, from Japan, a lot of different exhibits.
- Researcher:** Do you think if you work in the library, you will be mostly dealing with foreigners interested in Eastern culture, so you may not use a lot of Chinese.
- Sarah:** Yes, that's true. But they do have Chinese language tours in the Chester Beatty, so if Chinese people do come (2). I think there will be opportunity to speak.
- 65 **Researcher:** Other than that library, are there any chances that you can work in a museum or some similar areas?
- Sarah:** Yes, but maybe not in Ireland, certainly outside Ireland. I was a manager of a gallery in London, so potentially I can be a manager of an Asian art gallery somewhere, so I will be dealing with Chinese artists perhaps, so I need to speak the language, something like that. But Dublin is so small, there will not really be something like that here.
- 70 **Researcher:** In what situation you imagine you can speak Chinese, other than speaking to Chinese tourists.

75 **Sarah:** I would use it for Christmas cards to my friends in China (h), and I don't know, ordering food, and (1), I don't know.

**Researcher:** Do you think your learning is going to be wasted if you don't get a job that involves speaking Chinese?

80 **Sarah:** No, I think learning a language is always useful, and it is very enjoyable to learn it, and it is very good for your brain to learn a language. And it is also interesting in its own right to learn it, through learning it you learn the culture and history.

**Researcher:** Do you still follow the news in China?

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Still keep up with the updates of Ai wei-wei?

85 **Sarah:** =Yes, who doesn't (h), he is so prolific.

**Researcher:** You started learning Chinese in Dublin, going to the Confucius Institute, and you went to Hong Kong, then you have some conversation exchange.

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Researcher:** When did you go to the Confucius Institute?

90 **Sarah:** January 2011, or October 2010.

**Researcher:** Then you went to Hong Kong in 2012?

**Sarah:** 2011.

**Researcher:** You came back for a while before heading to London in 2014?

**Sarah:** Yes.

95 **Researcher:** For how long?

**Sarah:** For one year and a half.

**Researcher:** Then you came back for the course?

**Sarah:** Kind of, yes. I came back in May.

100 **Researcher:** Can I ask you the plot a line to indicate your motivational change in learning Chinese throughout the year?

**Sarah:** Yes (1), From one to ten, in terms of how motivated I am?

**Researcher:** Yes.

**Sarah:** London, zero, end of term now, zero.

**Researcher:** Why was it zero in London?

105 **Sarah:** I didn't have time, I was working very hard.

**Researcher:** You are now working very hard as well, but your motivation is ten.

**Sarah:** Just two more weeks of work, then I will have some free time.

**Researcher:** So you are looking forward to the free time.

- Sarah:** Yes.
- 110 **Researcher:** You have had this job since you finished this term?
- Sarah:** No. I have had it in the past six and a half week. I had another job, and then I had another job.
- Researcher:** What happened at the end of the term? It dropped to zero.
- 115 **Sarah:** I took a break. Pretty much after I did the last exam, then I didn't look at anything for a while. And I was working all the time, didn't have any time.
- Researcher:** In the first term, even though you were not happy with the teacher, you were very motivated.
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Did you do a lot of work at home?
- 120 **Sarah:** Yes, in the library.
- Researcher:** Were the materials given by the teacher helpful?
- Sarah:** No.
- Researcher:** So you were working on your own, basically?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- 125 **Researcher:** Did you get any help?
- Sarah:** I did some language exchange. That was very good, I did language exchange with a couple of people here. So that was motivating, because you get to speak.
- Researcher:** Did you do anything else?
- Sarah:** Yes, I watched Chinese programmes. And went over whatever we did in the class.
- 130 **Researcher:** You want to become an artist [in]
- Sarah:** [I am] an artist.
- Researcher:** Ok, if I say, you want to become an artist more involved in Chinese culture, am I right?
- 135 **Sarah:** I want to work in the Asian Art Museum (Pseudonym), so the summer before I started the course, I was applying for a job in the museum, but I didn't get it. So I thought I could do the course to increase my chance to get the job.
- Researcher:** But you also think of tourism?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Is it just a fallback?
- 140 **Sarah:** Yes, it is just a fallback. I wanna work in a cultural institution, which is related to Asian art. Very specific.
- Researcher:** I know you were an art manager, but where is the Asian art goal coming from? What kind of art did you deal with in London. Can you tell me more about that?

145 **Sarah:** Yes, we had a Japanese artist, a Korean artist, there was an exhibition for about a month long, and we have some group shows, I think there were a few Chinese artists involved in them. London is very much cultural.

**Researcher:** What was your role in the art gallery?

**Sarah:** I was curating exhibitions, calling the artists to get the works to the gallery, writing.

150 **Researcher:** I check the word ‘curator’ in the dictionary a lot of time, but the definition is quite vague, can you tell me more about the job of a curator?

155 So the artists make all the work, the curator take the works and decide how the works are displayed, and the curator writes about the artists. For example, this piece of work is related to this, and it is influenced by his or her earlier work, or maybe a new departure of it, blah blah blah. And you will also write the press release, you call the press. You work on the website, you organise the exhibition opening.

**Researcher:** This is what you did?

**Sarah:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Were you specialised in Asian art?

160 **Sarah:** No. It is an art and architecture museum, it is an art gallery so it specialises in architecture art.

**Researcher:** Where did the Asian thing come from?

**Sarah:** Some of the artists are from Asia.

**Researcher:** And you were fascinated by the work?

165 **Sarah:** No, not really. But some of the works were really nice, but the Japanese painting was pretty shit actually, but the Korean guy’s work was really nice.

**Researcher:** You want to do something related to Asian art before you worked in London?

**Sarah:** Yes, I went to an art college, I studied art for four years. So I have always been interested in Chinese art and artists.

**Researcher:** Did you specialise in Chinese art, it seems it just comes out of nowhere.

170 **Sarah:** Um (3), yes, that’s true.

**Researcher:** I remember you were interested in Chinese because you know someone from Singapore.

**Sarah:** Yes, I have a good friend from Singapore.

**Researcher:** How about your interest in Chinese art?

175 **Sarah:** In my college, I had to learn about different artists, not necessarily about Chinese, but interestingly, I just liked about their art, as a result, I got more interested in what they are talking about, and obviously you want to place art within a historical context, so it is interesting to learn Chinese history to see how these people have evolved as artists.

**Researcher:** Why is Chinese art so appealing to you?

180 **Sarah:** Because Chinese art, contemporary Chinese artists are operating under extreme duress from the Chinese Communist Party. A lot of them are talking about subjects which

they are not allowed to speak of, as a result, I think this forces them to be more creative and make their work very interesting, in a political context, because all art is political.

- 185 **Researcher:** In your opinion, is this what sets Chinese art apart?
- Sarah:** Not necessarily, I mean, a lot of artists, they are going against the mainstream, so even an artist in Ireland would have a lot of thing in common with them. We also have a right-wing government, slightly more liberal.
- Researcher:** You think they are working under duress?
- 190 **Sarah:** Some of them are obviously under duress, like Ai weiwei, being arrested. Some of them, very obvious, some of them, not so.
- Researcher:** This is how the interest in Chinese art and language converge?
- Sarah:** Maybe.
- Researcher:** Are you happy with your progress in Chinese?
- 195 **Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Which part do you think you have made most improvement?
- Sarah:** Um (2), writing, definitely the course has improved my writing because I couldn't write anything before.
- Researcher:** Other than having a book, what made you happy with the second term.
- 200 **Sarah:** The book, and the structure.
- Researcher:** You attended an evening Chinese course as well in the second term, how was that?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Which one is better?
- Sarah:** Probably the evening one, it was fun, interactive, and really, very structured, much more structured.
- 205 **Researcher:** The day time class wasn't as structured as the evening one?
- Sarah:** No, not at all.
- Researcher:** And it helps you more?
- Sarah:** Probably, I don't know.
- 210 **Researcher:** What elements impress you in the evening class?
- Sarah:** Really organised, and each class has a goal, which was met. And, to do with sentence structure, as opposed to just vocabulary, which was what we would do in the day time classes. So, that was really good, and it was fun and interactive, so everyone in the class was engaged and involved, it wasn't just the teacher lecturing, it was an interactive class.
- 215 **Researcher:** Can you think of a particular scenario that you are happy with?
- Sarah:** We have flash-cards in the evening class, I think it was really good, it was really good.

- Researcher:** What were the flash-cards for?
- Sarah:** Vocab.
- 220 **Researcher:** You matched the pictures with the words?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** Did the teacher give you any assignments, or homework in the evening class?
- Sarah:** No.
- Researcher:** Did you do conversation exchange in the second term?
- 225 **Sarah:** Yes, with different people as well. I was kind of meeting a girl from Taiwan, but it was only three weeks or something, and she has gone now.
- Researcher:** How about your Chinese trip, you are going next month, how are you feeling about that?
- Sarah:** Good, Heng hao (很好, which means very good in Chinese).
- 230 **Researcher:** Do you have high expectations?
- Sarah:** Yes, I think it will be very structured, very strict. I will get a lot of homework, yeah!. I can't wait.
- Researcher:** Do you want to do HSK?
- Sarah:** I will see, I will see how good I become after Beijing. But it, yes, I think it will definitely show people your level of Chinese.
- 235 **Researcher:** Is it a must?
- Sarah:** No, it is not a priority for me today. Of course, if I am looking for a job, I will need to show people my Chinese level, but I still have another year of college.
- Researcher:** Where do you see yourself in five years?
- 240 **Sarah:** It is a hard question, I don't know.
- Researcher:** But you believe that the Chinese that you have learned will not be wasted.
- Sarah:** NO (assertive), I don't think it is going to be the case.
- Researcher:** Are you afraid of losing the language if you don't get to use it.
- Sarah:** No, because I don't practise French, and I can still speak it; I don't practise Irish, I can still speak it. So I think once you know a language. It seems to stick.
- 245 **Researcher:** When you are learning Chinese, would you invent some sentences to practise some vocabulary, and imagine yourself using a particular character?
- Sarah:** I don't know. Sorry, I think I have to go now.....

## Appendix 7: Sarah's third interview transcript

### Sarah: third interview 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 (37 minutes)

- Researcher:** Hi, how are you?
- Sarah:** I am very busy, thesis, work
- Researcher:** Are you working now?
- 5 **Sarah:** Yes, monitoring the exams, and teaching arts and crafts for kids, once a week in the morning.
- Researcher:** You are learning Mandarin this term? aren't you?
- Sarah:** Yes.
- Researcher:** How was that?
- 10 **Sarah:** It was fine. It was better than last year.
- Researcher:** How about your experience in Beijing?
- Sarah:** It was brilliant, it was amazing, fantastic, um (0.3), really intense, I got up at six in the morning, classes at eight every day, really good teaching, the teacher was very passionate, really wanted you to learn, they had tonnes of experience, ab:solutely amazing.
- 15 **Researcher:** Was the class held in Chinese?
- Sarah:** Yes, because I was doing intermediate Chinese, so, the course was mainly speaking Chinese. If you didn't really understand the words, they would say it, they found out what it is in English.
- 20 **Researcher:** So they spoke English only when you didn't understand?
- Sarah:** Yes, if you are really unable to understand. They even explained vocabulary in Chinese, so it was brilliant, really learned a lot.
- Researcher:** What kind of job are you looking for now?
- Sarah:** I am looking for a job which allows me to use Chinese, it is related to the art
- 25 Industry a based in Ireland, and has a lot of interaction with people, and it must be well paid, £that would be great!
- Researcher:** Why does it have to be in Ireland?
- Sarah:** Because my family is here, my boyfriend is here. I like living here.
- Researcher:** But you think in London and other places, you would have more opportunities?
- 30 **Sarah:** Definitely, yes, definitely. But (0.2), there are opportunities in Ireland, it is just a matter of rooting them out.
- Researcher:** Have you rooted them out?
- Sarah:** I applied for a job in the Asian Museum (pseudonym), again, so I will see how it goes.
- Researcher:** You wrote an unsolicited letter?



35 **Sarah:** No No No!, they are hiring an event coordinator. So, I applied for that, and then I am just going to start researching different companies, and there are quite a few of them.

**Researcher:** When did you start looking for that kind of job?

**Sarah:** Maybe two months ago, maybe at the end of the term.

**Researcher:** Have you got any responses?

40 **Sarah:** No, not yet.

**Researcher:** Did you apply or you have just been looking for different opportunities?

**Sarah:** I am looking for different opportunities, I just applied for the Asian Art Museum, I am still waiting for their response, hope I can get it this week, we will see.

**Researcher:** You were in Hong Kong working in an art gallery sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club, right?

45 **Sarah:** That was a solo exhibition that I put on in Hong Kong. So I worked for six months in my studio at home, and produced a body of work, which I exhibited. And I got sponsorship from a couple of people, and that was good, then I love Hong Kong directly after that.

50 **Researcher:** You got some sponsorship, from whom?

**Sarah:** From companies, and they sponsored me for food, beer and cheese, haha.

**Researcher:** How did you get the sponsorship?

**Sarah:** I just sent them and told them what I was doing, and there was a lot of people, so I can advertise for them.

55 **Researcher:** What kind of companies were they?

**Sarah:** The Buddha beer company! You know?

**Researcher:** Buddha beer?

**Sarah:** Their bottle is like a Buddha, you know them, they are in Tai Koo Shing (a place in Hong Kong), *Zai Xiang Gong* (means in Hong Kong in Mandarin Chinese).

60 **Researcher:** £I didn't know.

**Researcher:** Was it (the exhibition) a paid-job?

**Sarah:** No!

**Researcher:** Did you do some conversation exchange as well in Hong Kong?

**Sarah:** Yes, I did it with my friend, Cindy. We met one to twice a week.

65 **Researcher:** For how long?

**Sarah:** Probably one or two years.

**Researcher:** Do you think it was easy to find someone to do conversation exchange in Hong Kong?

**Sarah:** Yes, it was pretty easy! She was very into Mandarin, she loves Mandarin, she took a

70 course in how to teach Mandarin in Beijing.

- Researcher:** She was from Hong Kong.
- Sarah:** Yes, she was a Hong Kong lady, she also taught me a bit of Cantonese when I needed it. And I taught her French.
- Researcher:** Are you doing any conversation exchange now?
- 75 **Sarah:** Not really. No, not really.
- Researcher:** Did you do it after you came back from Beijing?
- Sarah:** No! But I should have done that.
- Researcher:** You think it is easy to find people in Ireland to do a conversation exchange in Hong Kong?
- 80 **Sarah:** Really easy, just put on an ad on gumtree (1), they call it something else, it is not gumtree, call, lily something, but yes, it was really easy.
- Researcher:** Was it easy as well in Ireland?
- Sarah:** Yes, put up a poster.
- Researcher:** How did you get to do the exhibition in Hong Kong? Did you just send in a proposal?
- 85 **Sarah:** Yes, and it took about a month or something before they said yes. Yes, it was pretty easy.
- Researcher:** Do you think this exhibition experience helped you to get a job as an art manager in London after that?
- Sarah:** Yes, definitely yes.
- 90 **Researcher:** In what way?
- Sarah:** It helped my CV, gave me the experience.
- Researcher:** But the exhibition was not related to Chinese culture or Chinese language?
- Sarah:** No.
- Researcher:** So the idea of incorporating Mandarin Chinese into your art career happened when you were in London?
- 95 **Sarah:** Yes, I was just interested in the language in 2010 or 2011, then I did the course in Confucius Institute, I found the course very interesting, and I loved the characters, they have so much meaning in just one image, their view of the whole world put in one tiny image, so that was more “meaning-laden” than English. Visual meaning immediately, like *Tai Yang* (太阳, means the Sun), the words if you read it literally means “most” “阳 energy”<sup>10</sup>, and it make sense when it is used to describe the sun, because it has the most “阳 energy”. And the character “阳” also look like a sun. But
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<sup>10</sup> *Tai* (太) means most, *Yang* (阳) is a term in Chinese philosophy to denote a form of energy, for example, the sky, the sun and males are Yang. As opposed to the concept of *Yang* (阳) is the concept of Yin (阴), females, the earth and the moon all share the characteristics of Yin (阴) energy in Chinese culture. It takes Yin (阴) and Yang (阳) complementing each other for the world/a society to run in harmony.

in English, it is only alphabets. So I was interested in the language more than anything before I started this course, just to improve my Chinese language.

105 **Researcher:** Because you saw Asian Museum in Ireland, so you started thinking about marrying the two ideas? I mean the Chinese language and your career?

**Sarah:** Yes (1), maybe, there is no guarantee that I can do that. But I always want to learn more, so it is good to learn more.

**Researcher:** You wanted to learn more when you were in Ireland?

110 **Sarah:** No, I applied for the Master's in Chinese Studies (run by the University of Ireland) when I was in London when I was an art manager, I wanted to come home, and I think it would be a good way to make friends as well. For one reason, and of course the language element.

115 **Researcher:** We had our interview last July, can you plot a graph to tell me your motivation for learning Chinese in different stages since then.

**Sarah:** Last July, 5. And Now, I am really motivated, and I wanna do HSK 5 in November. October, it will be ten again.....(plotting going on)

**Researcher:** When did you have the idea to do HSK 5.

**Sarah:** At the end of the term.

120 **Researcher:** Why did it drop during the last term.

**Sarah:** Because of other modules.

**Researcher:** How many modules you have this term?

**Sarah:** Actually only one module. But, concentrating other stuff as well.

## Appendix 8: Tim's first interview transcript

Jan 15, 2016 Tim's first interview (45 minutes)

- Researcher:** Have you learned any foreign languages before?
- Tim:** At school, Irish and French
- Researcher:** How was the experience? Did you like the class?
- 5 **Tim:** No. I hate it, especially Irish, I hate the way it was taught. I don't see the point of it, but you were forced to learn. I learned French because (0.5) it was the only option (in the secondary school), and you had to have a language in secondary school, but I wasn't particularly interested in French.
- Researcher:** It was the only option in secondary school?
- 10 **Tim:** We had electives, and language we have French and German. But if I had chosen German, I wouldn't be able to have chosen the elective that I wanted to do more. We had History, Business, Economic, French and German, so if I chose German, I wouldn't be able to do Business.
- Researcher:** Did the timetable clash?
- 15 **Tim:** Yes
- Researcher:** If you had a choice back then, which language would you choose?
- Tim:** To be honest even if I could have chosen German, I wouldn't like it. I wouldn't be able to see how I am going to use the language. Even if Chinese had been offered at the time, it would have been more of a novelty. But if I had a choice, I would have been just uninterested in languages at the time.
- 20 **Researcher:** So you didn't have any interest in any languages back then?
- Tim:** Yes (1), but I think at that level, they didn't teach it the best way, and I didn't have the motivation.
- Researcher:** How about your confidence in terms of language learning?
- 25 **Tim:** I thought some people can learn a language easier, and I thought I definitely couldn't, but I don't believe it anymore. I think it is just about motivation.
- Researcher:** What happened between those two points? From the point you had no confidence at all, to what you believe now?
- Tim:** Aw (0.2) I think it is (0.2) I suppose you just think about it (0.2) there are plenty of people who can speak foreign languages, and there is nothing more unique than they just take their time and they are stuck with it. So I think (0.3) some people can and some people can't, it is just an excuse, you just have to apply yourself. You just need to try.
- 30 **Researcher:** When did you have this thought, when did it happen?
- 35 **Tim:** Um:: when I left secondary school, maybe (0.2) I suppose (0.3) after I left secondary school and I was in college (0.2) Um:: I was interested in China, and I see ah (0.5). I want to go to China, if I want to go to China at some stage I should change my opinion about learning Chinese, learning the language is necessary, give it a try at least.
- 40 **Researcher:** So you were interested in the country first, then you thought about the language?

**Tim:** Yes

**Researcher:** When did your interest in China start to develop?

**Tim:** Aw:: In college, I (0.2) met two guys who from China, just I talked with them about their experience. And our final year project was on Chinese beer-market, so I did a lot about reading about Chinese beer market, and there are also so many interesting industries growing.

**Researcher:** You were in marketing before you take this master's degree (0.5) Was your job involved beer or China?

**Tim:** No (0.5) not related

**Researcher:** It was those two friends who brought the country to your awareness, and when you graduated you want to learn more about China?

**Tim:** Yes (0.2) And also like (0.5), I (0.2) at that time there was just one thing in my mind. I had been asking how to say this how to say that (0.2) I wasn't really doing any lesson, then I found it really interesting and I think it was at the back of my mind, I would like to do lessons one day. Then I got a chance to get a deal that I was able to a go to a language school. There were a lot of languages but it was Chinese that they had discount on.

**Researcher:** When was it?

**Tim:** That was good few years ago, after college. It was kind of something in my mind that.....I would like to look out for, but I didn't search for the language, it just came up, and Aw. I got the deal and then Bob (Tim's friend who started doing a PhD in human right of Muslim in Xiang Jiang province) was in the class as well.

I didn't think that was easy, I thought there would be a lot of hard work, but the teacher was fun, the class was interesting. You kind of can make some progress in something you haven't even heard of, and.....I didn't think that I could be fluent, but at least I could keep doing it and see where I could go. Then I went to a few different speaking classes.

**Researcher:** Did you know Bob when you did the language course?

**Tim:** Yes, we went to primary school together.

**Researcher:** Was it Bob's idea or your idea to go to learn Chinese?

**Tim:** I saw the ticket first, and I didn't want to learn it myself, and he was always interested in learning the language (0.4). Yes, I had the interest after him definitely, he had the interest before me. And he was always interested in learning languages as well. So, we gave it a shot.

Because we can't find any other places (0.2) the place we went to only do level one, so we went to a different place-I went to a different place. It was just me, I went by myself.

**Researcher:** So you got some satisfaction from your very first Chinese class?

**Tim:** Definitely! If it was a bad experience, I probably wouldn't have pursued another one.

**Researcher:** How long had you been learning Chinese before the master's degree.

**Tim:** The first course we went just lasted for 11 weeks, two hours a week (0.6) Maybe six months and something like that. And I had been looking for somewhere else, the term in Trinity hadn't started yet, then I found the one in Sandyford, I think it was a twelve-

- 85 week course, one and a half hours a week. So I did five terms of those, but I think there was a three month gap in between each of them.
- One of term I have only got 6 weeks. But each of those and the gap is like 3 months, then we have to wait until the next term started, sometimes people can't do it. But when I started the degree here (in Trinity), they had already stopped for a year.
- Researcher:** So you had learned Chinese for about one to two years before this degree?
- 90 **Tim:** Two years, on and off.
- Researcher:** Doing a master's degree involves a lot of time and money, what made you take this huge step?
- Tim:** I still kind of ask myself this question. When I was doing my assignments, I was like 'Um: what am I doing'. But um:: I quite like the course, it is something quite specific-
- 95 **Tim:** When I finish the degree, I suppose I will get a get a, like a I might get a job in China, I will try to do a graduate programme, that would be with a company that has a branch in China. I knew I kind of need to go to college to do something (0.2) I got a job, but I didn't get the job I really want (0.4) there was a job I really wanted to get it, if I had got it, I would have been very pleased. So, I was thinking about doing a master's
- 100 degree. I was thinking about something about business. I didn't want to do a course that I have to be committed to it if I don't 100% want to do it. And then I saw this course, Bob told me about that. But I thought it was big, it is a very specific area, then I saw.....there were only two weeks left before I could apply for it. But I just applied for it, I probably won't get accepted but I just put my name down. The money was the
- 105 second thing, I wasn't sure if I could afford to do this. I didn't know if I could get this potential scholarship (0.2). Then I got accepted, and the other thing it would be (0.5) I would like to get a job in China.
- Researcher:** Did you want to get a job in China before you sign up for the Master's degree.
- Tim:** Yes, but at that time it was not very realistic, and then I thought if I do well in this
- 110 course, maybe I can get a decent job in sales and marketing in a Chinese company or a company based in China. And at that time, £I hope I do like China.
- Researcher:** What does it mean you hope that you will like China?
- Tim:** Aw, I just say, I have never been to China, and hopefully if I get a job to do with China, I will like it.
- 115 **Researcher:** When you said you want to get a sales and marketing job in a company based in China, when you first signed up the course in the language school, did you have this idea?
- Tim:** No, no, when I left college, there was a job in China, but I didn't think it is realistic, then it became more realistic when I took steps to achieve.
- 120 **Researcher:** Last time you were talking about whisky (while the interviewer was hanging out with the interviewee and the teacher).
- Tim:** There is an international graduate programme, one of the locations is China, I hope I will get this position.
- Researcher:** Is the company doing business in alcohol?
- 125 **Tim:** No, no, the companies are doing general consumer goods, drink, food, but marketing focused.

**Researcher:** Is it (0.2) you had a clear idea that what you wanted to do first, then you sign up for the course, or you developed what you want to do along the way?

130 **Tim:** If I could (0.3) I always had ideas that what I want to do, but it is getting clearer and clearer that it is possible. The idea is the same as a few years ago, but:: just gradually taking the steps and make it possible.

**Researcher:** I suppose you started learning Chinese in 2011.

**Tim:** I don't think it is that early, I just finished my degree (0.2) maybe 2013, November, on and off.

135 **Researcher:** If I ask you to plot the up and down of your motivation, on a scale of 1-10, can you indicate that?

**Tim:** (Plotting the scale) (29:00)

140 **Tim:** This would be I would like to learn, but it was just under the surface, I don't know whether it is going to happen. And then I attended the class, the interest grew. This will be at the midpoint of doing the evening course, but as soon as the course stopped, I lost a lot of motivation. Then when I started at Trinity, then the interest went back up. But it was dipped, because the assignments, History, Politics, all these subjects, the language, I kind of (0.5) didn't have much time at all. Motivation just dropped to

145 this level, just I didn't have the time, now it goes back up now because this time we have two modules only and one of them is language, my focus in this term will be language, but last term I just wanted to pass.

**Researcher:** there is a sharp increase.

**Tim:** This is when I was accepted by the University of Ireland. Then I was committed

150 **Researcher:** But before you got into the degree, did anything happen in your world? Or you just reasoned with yourself then you decided to do the course?

**Tim:** If I had an incredible job, I had a lot of money and I liked it, I wouldn't have given up the job and done the master's

**Researcher:** You didn't like your job?

155 **Tim:** I am thankful for the fact that I have a job but it is not something I want to do for the rest of my life. And I think this course will be something that help me find the job I would like to do.

**Researcher:** Here is 10, 10, 10, then here is

**Tim:** 4

**Researcher:** here is

160 **Tim:** 6.5

**Researcher:** Then, just want to clarify if you just want to do some marketing job in China, but doesn't have to do with alcohol?

**Tim:** No, I said alcohol is because it is an area possibly growing (0.2) it is not a new industry, but definitely a lot of room for growing.

165 **Researcher:** Is It something you always want to go to do, or

**Tim:** I just want to have a marketing job in consumer goods or I can work for companies like Coca-cola or any companies that have plenty of place around the world, I like it. I

said Whisky just because it seems to be a good opportunity and I saw positions offered in the graduate programme. So I think it would be a realistic option.

170 **Researcher:** How about the language modules? Are you happy with the modules?

**Tim:** yes, but that's because aw: I think we had far too many expectations at first to improve our language. I think it wasn't realistic given it is a very hard subject and you have to do a lot of readings for each module besides the language. So we couldn't give as much time as we expected or we would like to in language learning. But I am  
175 happy enough with the teacher, and I know that this year we won't have a lot of time, whereas next year when we go to China, it would be an intensive language learning experience, so I try to focus on academic work in this term and understand next term is where most of the learning experience will come from-. We kind of understand why our language learning (in the last term) is quite (0.2) aw: limited because of the other  
180 modules we had. So this term there is a change in the content of the modules and the structure. So we will see if something better will happen. As I said, in the last term our expectations were higher (0.2) to me I don't think I would be able to give more time, so I wouldn't be surprised (0.4) the motivation remains.

**Researcher:** Are you happy with the progress of yourself?

185 **Tim:** As I said we had three modules in the last term, and we have only got two. I think (0.2) if there were only two in the last term, we would have had more time to do the assignment and got a better result, which is annoying thinking about that.

**Researcher:** What would you suggest if you had a say on the method of teaching?

**Tim:** I would like to have a book, follow the plan, have something more structured. When  
190 we have free time we could have gone back to something and looked ahead.

**Researcher:** Gone back to something?

**Tim:** To review (0.2) One thing really helpful I learned from the evening classes is, we had the structure, we could look ahead and see what is going to happen in the next class. If I didn't have a text book and review, after the class I just went completely blank-  
195 We have a textbook as we learned, and the lessons plan to follow, where are you going and where have you been. This is not really the case in the last term. This is something really essential that we have a book, follow the structure, you know (0.4) Um: I think it is the most important thing.

**Researcher:** How about the teacher?

200 **Tim:** One thing I really appreciate is the teacher is really approachable, which is brilliant. I would like to have some more structure, but again, that would be too easy to (0.2) I have to take the responsibility myself and if I am honest to myself, I can't blame him unless I can say I have done the best of myself. Looking to that, I would have just let it go (0.2). At this point, I would just say, structure and get a book.

205 **Researcher:** You said when you were [younger]

**Tim:** [Because] a lot of people were taught Irish at a very young age, primary school, secondary school, they don't know where they can use the language, so I think that experience of learning a language for so many years and you are still not proficient in it, but some people can, at that time (0.2) some people think you have to learn a  
210 language when you grow up, but to me anyway, I don't believe it now.



## Appendix 9: Tim's second interview transcript

**Tim's second interview**      **August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2016 (65 minutes)**

- Researcher:** I remember you told me that you learn French and Irish at school, but the teachers were not great, and you couldn't find a reason why you should learn them. But did you think you were a bad language learner back then?
- 5 **Tim:** Yes, I thought I was a bad language learner. Just no interest at all, just getting by.
- Researcher:** Some people said if you had a better teacher, you would learn the languages better? How do you think about that.
- 10 **Tim:** Yes, with a good teacher, I would learn better. I think they are connected, I think you need a good teacher to motivate you, making you see the value. Like I said, I didn't see why I should learn the languages. If I had a teacher that made it interesting, I think it would have helped.
- Researcher:** After you graduated, you went to a language school to learn Chinese. Was the way the teacher taught you very different from your French and Irish teachers?
- 15 **Tim:** I am not 100% sure. It seems like a long time ago (h). But.....(0.3), yes, at least the class was a lot smaller. And (0.3), there were more interaction, the atmosphere is very different. When you were a child, you were more afraid of saying something wrong, not getting it right.
- Researcher:** You told me you met two Chinese guys at college, they kind of kindled your interest in Chinese culture, are you still in contact with them?
- 20 **Tim:** No, I wasn't very friendly with him, he wasn't a very interesting guy. Another guy was friendly with me for two years, but I lost his contact details. I didn't know his real name, I only know his English name, so I couldn't ask the college.
- Researcher:** How did they make you become interested in Chinese culture?
- 25 **Tim:** Um::, I don't think there was something very specific (0.3). I have never really (0.2) I had met people from China, but just like momentarily. So I have never really been friendly very with them, and never had proper discussion with them. Just in my own mind, thinking like, start to think: Ah, this is really interesting, I wonder what their perspectives would be like. It didn't come out as wildly different perspectives, but may be it is equally as interesting when you think the same on different topics, you are from a different culture, but we have a very similar view on this. It is very interesting.
- 30 I met people from different countries, I had conversations with them. I think it is also (0.3), at that time it was when the media had really covered a lot of Chinese events, the has become very aware of China.
- 35 **Researcher:** Was it 2008? Near the Olympic Games?
- Tim:** Just before that.
- Researcher:** Is it how the Chinese images stand out?
- 40 **Tim:** It wasn't really the Olympics, it was more like the economic point of views, just like aw::, incredible GDP, and how big a market China was. And these guys from China came by, it is like you met the people, the media talked about it and you thought about it.

45 I think I mentioned before, I did marketing, and then it just occurred to me it would be interesting to do marketing in developing countries, huge markets. So I kept thinking, it would be a good opportunities and also interesting to (2) we did our final year project on marketing in China, learned a bit from that, just, lots of different things.

I wasn't really interested in other developing countries. I've always been interested in China, I like it. I thought, maybe there are opportunities to make it feasible, I am tempted to learn more about it.

**Researcher:** You mentioned last time you didn't like your job, are you still in the same job?

50 **Tim:** Yes.

**Researcher:** Why did you not like it?

**Tim:** It is very monotonous, not much room for progression. Even if it does, it is not something I want to, the type of marketing.

**Researcher:** So it provided you with an escape?

55 **Tim:** Yes, kind of.

**Researcher:** Is this why you are thinking about why you are going to do in the future, and end up learning Chinese and then studying here?

60 **Tim:** Um(2) yes (0.2), when I started the classes, I never t really believe that I would actually (h) get a job in China, or wasn't really tempted to. It was just something really interesting. It (getting a job in China) seemed to me quite unrealistic though. And then I saw the lessons, I gave it a shot. I like them, and I kept joining them. Still, I still didn't believe (0.3). This is something I enjoyed, but it's never going to happen.

65 And then, I found out about this course, I was like GOD (h). I remember Bob (the Tim's flatmate) told me about that. And I thought if I am doing Chinese Studies, I have to go for it, I have to be very focused, I have to do it. I was kind of thinking, I was getting really fed up with the job, and I need to do something else, some kind of Master's to move on. I just decided, ok, why not (doing a Master's degree in Chinese studies).

**Researcher:** Why not another degree in marketing?

70 **Tim:** Yes (2), it is a good question (laughed). If I did another marketing degree, it would definitely increase my chance in doing something else, but I kind of just thought that (10). I suppose I gave a lot of time in the short time I had to think (.). I really need to do something that I enjoy. I am going to give it one year or two year, so I have to do something that I enjoy. I enjoy Chinese studies, and I then I will have a choice that actually go for job possibilities in China, it is kind of the push. At this point I am still glad that I chose it, we have to wait and see what will happen.

**Researcher:** Are you not kind of fed up with marketing?

80 **Tim:** Not at all(0.2), I think it is a bit too narrow and (2), maybe not actually (2). I mean, it is never one or another. I thought if I can mix some business subjects and Chinese studies, and Chinese language, maybe more useful than just having (.), maybe it is not true, but just having business.

**Researcher:** There is some kind of an ideal course out there for you?

- 85 **Tim:** If there is something like Chinese studies and business master's, that would have been perfect. Or if they even kept the module they said they would have. There was meant to be a business module in this, it was meant to be in this term (the second term of the first year), it would be very disappointed if it is not going to happen in the next term because three of us (his classmate) asked about the module.
- Researcher:** Can you just go to the school of business and take some modules.
- 90 **Tim:** Yes, I should have, but (3), they are non-credited, they are still useful, you just can't put it on your CV. But there are two business modules that we can take in Beijing, there are two electives, with the compulsory Chinese (language class), even if it is only one term, but still.
- Researcher:** What modules do you have to choose from in Beijing?
- 95 **Tim:** Just two electives, 15 different ones, like history, law, China's global policy, a few business.
- Researcher:** Are you looking forward to your trip?
- Tim:** No
- Researcher:** How about the language module?
- 100 **Tim:** (2) Yes (with hesitation 0.2), but also, I am also anxious about (0.2). When I started, I really want to improve greatly at the language. It would be very disappointing if I don't have a decent level of Chinese when I come back. I hope the class is good. But I don't know how big the classes are, the level of other people.
- 105 **Tim:** But I think it is just like, first day at school, that kind of thing (h). I think after the first week, it will be ok.
- Researcher:** You are not looking forward to the trip because of the anxiety?
- Tim:** It is not that I don't want to go. I was just messing a bit, but it is more like (0.2), it is good to have the trip.
- Researcher:** How many hours per day?
- 110 **Tim:** I think about two hours per day. I am not sure, I wrote down (2), I can just check (checking his diary).
- Researcher:** It is fine, I can find out the details online. I remember you said that there were a lot of modules in the first term so you didn't have a lot of free time for your mandarin. In the second term, there are less module. Did you work harder than the first term?
- 115 **Tim:** No!
- Researcher:** Why is it the case?
- Tim:** Because when I have free time, I just work instead
- Researcher:** So you spent more time on your paid job?
- Tim:** Yes.
- 120 **Researcher:** Why did you choose to spend more time on the job?

125 **Tim:** Because I need to, just to pay for general stuff, rent and bills. In the first time, I didn't have time and I didn't have any money at all, so I just thought, if I had the opportunity, I need to save up a bit. And yes, I always have it on my mind that in the second year when I am in China, I have to pay, and I won't be able to work, it will be kind of tough, so I worked more.

**Researcher:** How do you think about the second term of the Chinese teaching?

130 **Tim:** Yes, I like it, but (0.2), I think (0.2), not having (0.5). I think there should be Chinese lessons every single day, there is no point in having two hours on a Monday, and two hours on a Friday, it is kind of pointless learning a language. I would like to have two hours every day. If (0.2), it would be different if we have a business module and an elective language module, you can explain it away, but you are learning a language, a master's in Chinese Studies, we should be having intensive language learning, it should be the main focus.

**Researcher:** How many hours did you have in the first term?

135 **Tim:** It was kind of messy because it was split into two classes, I think we had three to four hours per week. But I think it should be two hours each day.

**Researcher:** When did you begin to think that there should be more class hours in your mandarin learning? Did you have the same feeling in the first term?

140 **Tim:** Maybe at that time, it wasn't obvious to me.

**Researcher:** Are you happy with your progress?

145 **Tim:** No (3), it worries me as well. I feel like (0.3), if (0.3), I am sure it is the same for most people, if you don't have designated language learning (1), and you are expected to do it in your free time, the free time will be filled by assignments or work, so you need to have classes.

**Researcher:** Do you feel you have made a lot of progress compared to the time when you just started.

150 **Tim:** For a year and a half, I just did lessons once a week, in the evening. I think my level was pretty good, but the lesson stopped, there weren't enough people to do the classes. So it was the best year before I came here and started this course. And I did forget a lot of stuff. But doing the lessons here brought the stuff back to my mine. But I still think I would like to have more classes.

155 **Researcher:** Do you think because you haven't made a lot of progress in the past six months, so you are not looking forward to the next term in Beijing?

**Tim:** No, not at all. It is just a big move, going to a new college (Beijing University), I am looking forward to a lot of part of it. But going to a big classroom filled with people I don't know and learning a language that I am not good at all. Thinking about it is a bit daunting, you know.

160 **Researcher:** How many people are there in the classroom?

**Tim:** I assume there will be a big group. I could be wrong, but I doubt that there will be a small class. So probably there is a huge class with people far better than me. I imagine

165 there will be a lot of (0.3) having to respond with a language that I am not familiar with. This is what I am not looking forward to. But I am looking forward to the rest of it.

**Researcher:** How long is the study trip?

**Tim:** Four months, I am coming back just before Christmas.

**Researcher:** You told me you want to do some kind of internship in Irish companies or government jobs that require you going to China. Do you still want to do that?

170 **Tim:** Yes.

**Researcher:** How available is this target for you now. I remember you said it was getting clearer that you could do that in the last interview.

**Tim:** Yes, I think it is definitely possible, I don't think you need to have the language to access to the roles that I am looking for. I think, a lot of roles would require you to have a good level of the language, the better your language, the better chance you will have. But I think the opportunities I am looking for would be(.), I would like to have a decent level of Chinese by the time I finish this course (2). No, I think it is very realistic, I think there are a lot of opportunities. (Know there are jobs and competition), somebody would get it, and other things that person has, would be  
175  
180 hugely different cv from me. It just depends.

**Researcher:** Do you think knowing Chinese will help you stand out?

**Tim:** I hope so, otherwise, it is a bad calculation. I mean (1), I went to career fairs, for a lot of companies that I have been interested in working for, internships or just, jobs, a lot of the representative there, they all seemed very positive about the course that we are  
185 doing. They all said they were looking for people who had an interest in the Chinese market, who can speak Chinese, it is all areas that (0.5), they are looking to develop relationships and (2). They all seemed far more positive than I expected about what the course (2). There wasn't one person who said: 'We want somebody who does business'. This is what make me interesting because I have marketing and Chinese.

190 **Researcher:** Have you talked to many people in that kind of fair?

**Tim:** Yes, maybe ten to fifteen, there were many representatives, internships or jobs that they have, they seemed quite positive. I am also looking at some graduate programmes. Obviously if you want to work in China, a lot of companies have graduate programmes, for different reasons. If you want to do it for the Chinese  
195 market, having Chinese, is not a necessity, it is definitely an advantage. Yes, it may not suit a lot of business, but definitely some.

**Researcher:** Can I say you are becoming more positive comparing with last year?

**Tim:** I guess no, I guess what I am doing is, the course is not going to disadvantage me in getting a job, it will be up to myself whether I get a job, what do I do in the course, and the actual things that I put on my CV. So if I don't get a job, I won't blame the master's, it will be my own lack of, whatever. It is the way I feel (2). Yes, I feel like I  
200 made a good choice of the course, to follow through.

**Researcher:** Do your friends know that you are learning Chinese? What do they think about that?

**Tim:** Yes, they do. They think it is (h), strange, crazy (0.5), but also, you know, not in a bad way (h). It is difficult, but it will work out. They are a bit awed I suppose.  
205

- Researcher:** Are you afraid of letting your friends down?
- Tim:** I am afraid my friend would ask me to say some Chinese to them, but luckily they don't know Chinese, I can just make something up.
- 210 **Researcher:** People would expect that you speak quite well, or do they have some unrealistic expectations.
- Tim:** Um: they are the people I don't care about (5). There is nothing really I can think of (2). I am not going to think about that before I finish the course, because learning a language is not just one term, two terms. I don't expect when I finish the course, I could have any types of conversations with anybody, I know it is unrealistic. It is going to be a level that I am happy with, to be able to continue on.
- 215 **Researcher:** Do you want to do HSK, or other types of Chinese proficiency exams in the future?
- Tim:** Yes, after I come back. I hope, maybe level 4 after some time, and actually pass it. This is essentially (0.5) I hope I would like to pass this level after I come back from Beijing.
- 220 **Researcher:** Do you have any language modules after you come back?
- Tim:** I don't think so. I think we just have the dissertation. There is a language module that I can choose, but I am not going to choose it, because there is only one (elective), and I need to choose business one. I hope that somebody will pick the language module, if they run it, then I can go to the class, but it won't be for the credits, I just go to it.
- 225 **Researcher:** Do you think if you want to do anything about marketing in China, the business knowledge is more important the language?
- Tim:** No, I think it is not the case of having one or the other, you need to have both, I think it is important to have a good balance. If I was only doing business, and I hope to work in China, I would say I wish to have done a Chinese module, and it is the other way round. I think you just need to have a good balance, because people applying for a job, they may have a good balance, and maybe not, and if you do, it is definitely an advantage.
- 230 **Researcher:** What kind of marketing you are thinking about?
- Tim:** I don't know. The jobs that I will apply for will be mainly graduate programmes. There are different stream, finance stream, sales and marketing stream, I am hoping to get into a marketing stream, something related to sales and marketing and development, something like that. A lot of these programmes last for one year, two years, so you could be doing a wide variety of roles. You may do a lot of different roles outside of marketing itself, you may spend a few weeks or months in different department of the company, so you don't really know, which is all very general, not very specific.
- 240 **Researcher:** But do you have something particular in mind? What do you like to do?
- Tim:** I suppose working on developing and marketing campaign or sales plan for a product to launch, or to China, to help rebranding, helping the sales, kind of research of testing.
- 245 **Researcher:** Can I say the planning behind the scene is what you want to do?
- Tim:** Yes.

- 250 **Researcher:** How do you think about the Chinese class in this term? You were not very happy with the course in the last term because it wasn't very structured, and you wanted to have a textbook as well, and you got it this term, how do you think about this term in general.
- Tim:** Yes, it is much better, but I don't think we had enough time. I think, yes, it is also about how many modules you have a week. It is nice if you have four days, maybe listening on two days, you can have different exercises from the book, or the other exercises for the other days. But when you are trying to do different things and you have only four hours in a week, I don't think you have enough time.
- 255 **Researcher:** So you think it is about the number of hours?
- Tim:** Yes, not a lot of stuff is going to sink in if you have two hours, and you have to wait a couple of days, and you have another two hours, you tend to forget most of the stuff.
- 260 **Researcher:** You told me previously that the class was funny and there was a lot of interaction as well.....
- Tim:** Yes, it was a small class, and she was a very very good teacher. She made a really fun, relaxing environment, but she wasn't messing, she was just like the opposite of primary school, you are not afraid of making any mistakes. The work she gave us was fun to do and interesting, but also the material that, the work from the book and the progress we need, was covered by the homework she gave.
- 265 **Researcher:** How many hours do you spend on revising your Chinese in here?
- Tim:** Um::, not many, to be honest (1), to be honest, it would be the least among all other classes because they took more time. You spend as much time as you need to get things done. Other classes, quite a lot of time to do research, assignments, presentations, the other smaller assignments, different things that we need to do. They are so time-consuming, you wouldn't have the basics of the knowledge of the subjects that you are going to write your assignments. And Chinese, you can do your homework in 30, 40 minutes, and then you are done, it doesn't need to go beyond that, the other modules took weeks to get an assignment done.
- 270 **Researcher:** Did the second term free you up because there weren't that many modules?
- Tim:** The focus went on the other modules because they require more time, not the case that I didn't care about the Chinese module. I could have definitely put more time on Chinese, but I would have time to work that many hours. Again, it always comes down to what is necessary, you know, the other modules just require more, and you just can't get away with it.
- 275 **Researcher:** According to your research, do you think working in marketing does not require that much of skills in Chinese.
- Tim:** I would say, in terms of graduate programmes, a lot of them do not require, I am sure some of them will, but still, I would like to have a decent level, but aw: either way you know, not a great level, but conversation level by the time I finish.
- 280 **Researcher:** If they tell you, for example, you don't need a lot of knowledge of Chinese, you just need to use the language to greet people, and show a good impression.....
- Tim:** NO, THIS IS NOT THE TYPE OF JOB I WANT, this is the other types of job. Maybe I am thinking of something else, but if they just want, a western person just to, like, promotion? No, most of the jobs I am looking at have a real career path.
- 290

295 **Researcher:** Hypothetically, they are real job, but they wouldn't need a high level of Chinese, they only want you to use Chinese to impress their business partner, when it comes to business, everything is in English. If it is the case, would you still think that you need to put a lot of effort to learn, or still keep doing the language.

300 **Tim:** If you live in China and you don't get as good as you can at the language, what kind of person you are? I never want to be the kind of person who live in another country and can't speak the language, I hate those type of people. Also, I think, beyond that, I think it is not just about the job, I would be interested in visiting the places that I have never visited before, but a lot of thing, you are not going to get full experience, you are not going to know how to interact with the people. What are you going to DO? Are you just going to hang out with the other foreign people, and no interaction with the other people. HOW DO YOU KNOW WHAT IS GOING ON IN THE NEWS, normal news. How can you know whether your company progresses in other areas in the industry in that country if you can't speak the language? You are just a handicap and things only asshole would do. I don't see any reason to do that.

305 **Researcher:** So it is more than just the career?

310 **Tim:** Yes, and I think it is the career that makes it possible, I think it is important to (2), unless I have it, I would go over, I can speak a decent level of Chinese, and I don't really like it after all, it wasn't because of me. And hopefully I come back and find a marketing role, or in another country, a lot of them would still be related to China. If I go and work, just say, an English teacher, just go to China. and I come back, there wasn't really much for me to do. You can teach English somewhere else again, it would be like a handicap in your career as well. So, I think you just need to have your career in mind when you are doing anything.

315 **Researcher:** Would you think about working in China more now, or more vividly so to speak, comparing to last year when you first started?

320 **Tim:** I still, um, I still can't. Not that I don't believe that would happen, I don't know, things are more possible now, definitely. I kind of purposely not to think too much about what will happen, because people always say, no matter what you imagine, things will be very very different. But this doesn't stop me from learning as much as I can.

325 **Researcher:** If I ask you to plot a graph again. You finished college in 2012, and in 2013 October, you had your first Chinese course, isn't it? You did some Chinese courses in 2014 for the whole year, but in early 2015, you didn't learn Chinese because the school didn't

**Tim:** It sounds about right (h). Yes, that is right.

**Researcher:** So the motivation picks up a little bit now when you think of the coming up intensive course

330 **Tim:** Yes. But I am working a as well, I can't say I am very motivated, otherwise I would be staying at home studying four to five hours per day

**Researcher:** Why did you become more motivated in April?

**Tim:** Because everything was finished, and I kind of had it in my mind I was going to study a good few hours per week. And by the time, actually by now, I would have been studying all summer. But it didn't happen.

335 And because it didn't happen, my motivation dropped, because other things, like I work. I suppose I can do both, but I am just kind of lazy.



**Researcher:** In the beginning of the term, you were motivated as well. Is it for the same reason?

**Tim:** Yes

**Researcher:** What was the score here? The low point?

340 **Tim:** Mid-term is never good at motivation.

**Researcher:** Now?

**Tim:** Probably two.

**Researcher:** In the beginning of the first term, you were not even as motivated as you were in the language school, why was that?

345 **Tim:** Because when I was in the language school, I really hate the job I have done, I really enjoy learning Chinese in the evenings, something I was looking forward to, something I enjoy doing in the evening. It was like a, like, taking my mind off being that job, and spent a lot of time studying. When I started this course, as I say, there were too many modules, and I wasn't even think about the importance of language,  
350 it wasn't my focus.

**Researcher:** Does learning Chinese make you a different person? Have you changed since then? For example, do you feel more confident?

**Tim:** In some ways, in other ways because you know you are, in some ways yes, because you know more, but in other ways, no, because you are surrounded by more Chinese speakers, you are more aware how far you have to go to be able to speak, like to have a decent conversation. You know so far away you.  
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## Appendix 10: Tim's third interview transcript

### Tim's third interview, April 2017 (47 minutes)

- Researcher:** I wanna ask, you said your job was very boring, how long have you been in that job?
- Tim:** Since I started my undergraduate.
- Researcher:** About 2008?
- 5 **Tim:** 2009, my job started a year after my college.
- Researcher:** Has the job nature always been like that.
- Tim:** Um::, it is a student job. <No, not a student job> (0.2). What do you mean, you mean is it always boring? No, it is not, there are some interesting part to it. I have learned a lot of interesting things about market research, I think it has been very helpful, more helpful than if I had another part-time job, completely unrelated. But if you have the same job, over a year, it has become monotonous.
- 10 **Researcher:** Would you identify yourself as a marketing person?
- Tim:** Um (0.3). It is what I would like to do, I won't identify myself as a marketing person.
- Researcher:** By profession, would you say: "I am in marketing"?
- 15 **Tim:** No, I think, no. I don't think I am qualify to call myself to be in marketing. When you say you are in marketing, you are telling people you have some input and parts in it, but I don't, it is a very low level job, so I won't claim myself a marketing professional. I think it is a slight exaggeration. This is what I hope to be.
- Researcher:** You are working towards this direction?
- 20 **Tim:** I hope so.
- Researcher:** When you started studying here, you were more motivated, why?
- Tim:** Before when I studied in the language school, I did it on and off, it wasn't a full time commitment. But this master's degree, this is going to be a large part of my future, and my interest in my own personal time. So I must do it seriously, otherwise I would just waste it.
- 25 **Researcher:** You said when you first joined the class in the language class, the teacher was very engaging, and the class was very interactive.
- Tim:** We had the same teacher, the whole class's level moved up, and the teacher moved up as well.
- 30 **Researcher:** Do you think you are a realistic person?
- Tim:** Um::, I don't know how to answer that (0.2). In some ways, I am, in other ways, I can be, um (0.3), a realistic person (h)?
- Researcher:** For example, when you were in the language school, you thought of working in China as well [
- 35 **Tim:** I think] when you are talking about realistic, it is about how ambitious a person is, someone may see I am very realistic, someone said I am not. The opportunity I was talking about, maybe it is realistic, but it was just because I am not confident about my

level of Chinese. I wasn't ambitious enough to go ahead and try, and you never know whether it is realistic unless you try it.

40 **Researcher:** Looking back, do you think it is a realistic move to do this master's?

**Tim:** I can't say because I don't know, but I am definitely more confident than before I did it. If you have an interview without Chinese, obviously you will have a lower change. But, I mean (0.2), obviously (1), I can't tell how much it is going to help me until I really start. But confidence, yes, definitely I have more.

45 **Researcher:** You are not learning Chinese this term?

**Tim:** Yes, I am not.

**Researcher:** You think your level of Chinese is enough for your [goal?

50 **Tim:** B NO], NO. DEFINITELY, I am definitely intended to, and wanted to continue on, at the moment, I am just busy working on my thesis, before, there were assignments, I didn't really put any time on it outside of the college. But the reason why I would like to get a job in China is because I hope to pick up the language in a year or two, you know of course I like working in China, but also because I will have no excuse not to learn the language because that will be my best chance to do it.

**Researcher:** So learning the language is not just for getting a job?

55 **Tim:** No, No

**Researcher:** Other than career development, what else makes you want to learn now?

**Tim:** I like learning the language myself, because I spent a long time trying to do it. I have done this master's, this Chinese master's, if I end up not being able to speak the language, obviously it is a failure.

60 **Researcher:** Did your experience in China help your learning?

**Tim:** Yes, I found that at the time I really really improved. The reason why I improved because I used it every day, since I stopped using it every day, it's kind of, just went, it just goes very quickly once you have stopped it.

**Researcher:** How do you feel about losing the language?

65 **Tim:** I have accepted it for a long time, or maybe I cop out. But in China, it really helps because you definitely used it much greater deal. And I think if I can be there for one year two year three year, I think I can pick up a large amount of it.

**Researcher:** Did you have a lot of English speakers in your class?

**Tim:** Two others, three of us, one guy from England one guy from Australia.

70 **Researcher:** Was it up to your expectation? Or was it even better?

**Tim:** ↑Yes, it was better. It was a really nice environment to learn. It wasn't like messing, it was really relaxed, you didn't feel bad making mistakes, but we were constantly learning, and everyone got along very well. The teachers were all brilliant.

**Researcher:** How many hours did you have every day?

75 **Tim:** Four hours per day.

- Researcher:** And it went on for three months?
- Tim:** Four months, but I missed the last month, because of my leg (Bruce's leg was injured in an accident so he had to stop going to college in during his exchange in Beijing).
- Researcher:** Because you missed a month, you felt you missed out something?
- 80 **Tim:** Yes, my learning ended after three months. What I am saying is (2), the dream died (h).
- Researcher:** Are you serious?
- Tim:** I hoped to go back and but when the fourth month had past, obviously I didn't get the chance, I didn't get the last one.
- 85 **Researcher:** Last time you said you were anxious about coming back without a decent level, but since you lost one month, you think it is ok or you still have the anxiety.
- Tim:** No, I suppose (1), I change my mind, I didn't learn as much as I imagined I would, I thought I was too optimistic about what would happen in those four months. But my progress I made (2), make me believe that if I go back, I would be able to make a decent progress. But (2), to me at least, to make a reasonable progress, you must live there for a year or two, and if after a year, I am sure I can learn a lot.
- 90 **Researcher:** Is your Chinese learning always career-oriented, or there is something else after two years studying in the University of Ireland.
- Tim:** It is definitely career oriented, it has to be. Well, if I didn't have interest, I wouldn't have chosen the course. But if I am going back to learn Chinese, I must be down to the career that I get, otherwise I would just go over there, teach English, for a couple of year, learn the language. I don't really want to do that, I want to get both in once.
- 95 **Researcher:** If you cast your mind back to 2009, or 2010, before you started learning Chinese, could you imagine yourself able to speak two languages?
- 100 **Tim:** Um (1), no. No, I thought it would be nice, but I wouldn't think I will be able to (0.5), I am terrible at languages. Um (0.5), I still am (h), now I have (2). I used to think some people are good at languages and some people are not, maybe it is slightly true, but I think it is more about how much you keep working on it now.
- Researcher:** When did you begin to have this thought?
- 105 **Tim:** It is hard to put a time, even when I was learning Chinese, not in college, there was a time, I couldn't make any additional progress, I didn't continue to study. After I saw this course, and I read about it, I supposed then (2), I thought an actual degree would give me an opportunity to achieve, and to get some credibility, but whether it really helps, like I said, we have to wait and see.
- 110 **Researcher:** Before studying here, had you ever thought of working overseas?
- Tim:** Not properly, I thought: "Yes, it's nice to have it", but I didn't have any intention to do it.
- Researcher:** Do you think you have changed after learning Chinese and doing a course here?
- 115 **Tim:** Yes, especially going to Beijing and lived there for four months, I could never imagine myself doing that at all before. I thought it was too much a step. I would never consider it before. It was part of the course, and I just told myself, "You are part

of the team, it would help you to achieve, you have to do it”, this helps me remove a lot of excuses. Also, it made me more willing to do it. Now I don’t think it is a big deal, and hopefully I am able to go back in a work environment.

120 **Researcher:** Why was it a big deal?

**Tim:** Because I had never lived in anywhere else before, and it was China, it is the most different place you can go to. I thought there would be a big cultural shock, but it didn’t happen. Because I talked to so many people, they told me what to expect, what not to expect, and I got on ok. I think because people are so friendly, we were in a college environment. It was not, you had to phone your landlord for the rent, and paid for the internet, and you took the bus for work. It wasn’t that kind of environment.

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**Researcher:** When you were at work, do you feel less motivated. Does the daily grind of filling in questionnaires, talking to people on the phone, you said your job is very monotonous, do you have a lower expectation of yourself, or think that things are not going to work out when you are at work?

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**Tim:** No, because I have had this job since college. (0.2), I mean, if I am not doing this course and just work, it would be very depressing. But because there is a path to something else, so, it doesn’t affect that much at all.

**Researcher:** Have your perspective on China changed before and after your trip to China.

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**Tim:** The only thing that surprised me is (2), I had never seen that many types of vehicles. We went to Beijing, it was supposed to be massive, but I didn’t expect the roads were so big, the traffic was so bad, people so bad at driving. I had heard that before, I wasn’t shocked.

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**Tim:** Before I went, I got three different types of information, the first is from the mass media, generally negative; the second type is friends; the third type was videos, like youtube. They are all very conflicting. So (2), you must go and see yourself.

**Researcher:** Which source gave you a more accurate representation of China?

**Tim:** I think the mass media talked about the level that ordinary people would not have experienced. When I was in China, the feeling is like, if you didn’t tell me it is a communist country, I wouldn’t know. It is one thing.

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**Researcher:** How about the second type of information, something involves every day experience?

**Tim:** We just talked about everyday life, nothing too serious.

**Researcher:** After the trip, you got a more positive attitudes towards China?

**Tim:** Yes.

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**Researcher:** Did you use Chinese outside college in Beijing.

**Tim:** Yes. If you don’t speak Chinese, even just small amount of it, you won’t be able to get by. I am sure if other people saw me speak Chinese, they would feel it is very funny. But, if you are going to a restaurant, or just buy things, you need some Chinese. In college, students have a decent level of English, mostly. But for people like the other generation, English is like, non-existent, just like some random words. There was a day, I went to a place to get a drink, there was a nice guy, and his wife. They were trying to talk to me, and I tried answering their questions, but when it got more advanced, they knew I was able to say something, and they said “it’s ok” (h).

**Researcher:** It was in Chinese or English?

160 **Tim:** Chinese

**Researcher:** Does the trip make you want to live in China more?

**Tim:** Yes, I think it becomes more realistic. Obviously I have lived there, so it is no longer a big deal. But I just want to go somewhere else.

**Researcher:** Why?

165 **Tim:** Just too much traffic.

**Researcher:** What social class would you fit yourself into?

**Tim:** The true working people that Mao describe (H)?

**Researcher:** Proletariat?

**Tim:** No, I think, middle class.

170 **Researcher:** Which one is true?

**Tim:** (hhh), I don't know.

**Researcher:** You said you saw a discount on the Chinese course, that's why you went on to do your very first Chinese course, if other course were also on discount, do you think you would have done that language?

175 **Tim:** No, all the languages had discount. So, no, Chinese was the only language that interested me at that time, I wouldn't have done another language.

**Researcher:** How about your motivation, in terms of how much you want to learn and how much effort you put into it?

**Tim:** Oh, they are two very different things.

180 Plotting the graph

**Researcher:** Why is it so low here, the motivation?

**Tim:** No, I think it is not the motivation, it is not the time, college and work at the same time, very tired.

**Researcher:** You put in a lot of effort in China.

185 **Tim:** Yes, but after I hurt my leg, I stopped. And now, because of the thesis, and previously it was the essays.

**Researcher:** How many hours do you work?

**Tim:** Varies, I work full time, 9-5, if I am not in college, I worked only two out of five days, in the evening. So I work half week half day.

190 **Researcher:** I think this is it. Thank you very much for your help

Appendix 11: Interview transcript of Alba, Sarah and Tim's instructor

**Interviewing the Chinese Instructor on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2016 (55 minutes)**

**Researcher:** I remember you taught quite differently between the first and the second semester?

**Instructor:** For the Master's students, right?

**Researcher:** Yes, what did you teach them, can you please tell me briefly?

5 **Instructor:** The first thing is we have totally different aims and learning outcomes. The purpose of the first semester is try to let the students be more engaged in oral Mandarin, so the focus went to the speaking part. And there were circumstances that we had, we had our environment (0.2), we had oral presentations.

**Researcher:** The oral presentation was only for assessment?

10 **Instructor:** Yes, only for assessment. Teaching methods for this part, basically is task-based. I normally asked them to imitate a real situation in life: give them a topic and ask them how to work out orally in such situations.

**Researcher:** Can you give me an example?

15 **Instructor:** A lot of students fancy about Chinese cuisine, I remember I gave them a task, asking to try to order something from a Chinese restaurant. I asked them to contact a Chinese takeaway using Chinese, but unfortunately they couldn't make it (h).

We do have some experience that we tried to dine in a Chinese restaurant. Before the meal was served, I asked my students to try to communicate with the waiter or waitress about how to order some dishes, and things like that. This is kind of a real-life task.

20 **Researcher:** Where did you get the impression that they are interested in Chinese cuisine?

**Instructor:** Because before the start of the semester, they were asked to fill in a questionnaire, which includes a placement test in order to check their proficiency and find out their ideas about what they want to learn. For example, which aspects they want to improve more, speaking, or focusing on HSK tests.

25 Another reason that I think they are interested in Chinese cuisine is during the class, whenever I mentioned food, they were very motivated, and they kept mentioning that they needed to learn more vocabulary about food. I think they are more interested in that part, cultural part.

**Researcher:** Beside Chinese cuisine, did you talk about other cultural aspects?

30 **Instructor:** The first few classes were introduction. And I knew that they are going to China this year, and they may experience the culture more than the language at that time. I remember I showed them a lot of videos about cultural things, such as the Olympic Games opening ceremony (2008 Beijing Olympics), and the parade that commemorate China's victory in the second world war, and some basic ideas of  
35 Confucianism, because it has to do with some Chinese characters. When I taught them some vocabulary, we learned some vocabulary every week. Sometimes I talked about Chinese idioms, and you need to explain some cultural background, some historical background.

40 For I can see, students at the advanced level, they are very interested in history and stories behind the characters, that is why I devoted a lot to the cultural part.

**Researcher:** Because you think they like it, that is why you gave them more?

**Instructor:** Yes.

In the second semester I gave them more – The reason I change my teaching method is because, you know, after each term, we have (0.2).

45 **Researcher:** Can I go back to the first semester first? After the first term, you did some assessment, were you happy with their progress?

**Instructor:** Um (0.3), the progress I was happy with two of them, one is from Mandarin One, which is a lower level class, Sarah, because she made great progress.

50 I remember the first time she did a placement test for her pronunciation, she is very ambitious, and I am sure she did a lot of work after classes. In the final presentation she was quite fluent and kind of spontaneous while doing the speech, so I am quite happy with her improvement.

The second person that I am quite happy with is Alba, she is very (0.2) her language level was already advanced before she entered the class. And she keeps improving,

55 she is the kind of student who knows how to, um, doing language drill, or practice. In the final presentation, I was very happy with their performance.

Tim and Ivy, they did make some progress, but not as much as the other two.

**Researcher:** What is the reason behind Tim and Ivy making less improvement?

**Instructor:** I think Tim is due to his own personality I think, he is, um, not a slow learner, but he is, kind of relaxed, not too ambitious about things. He will do something he is interested in, but he will not do something crazily throwing himself into studies. I think this is his own learning style.

60 For Ivy, she is very talented, she is very smart, and she just needs to spend more time after the classes. I know she is very busy after the class, talking about progress, she can be brilliant if she spends more time on the language.

65 **Researcher:** How about Carlie?

**Instructor:** He is great. He is a typical intrinsically motivated learner, he learns it because he likes it, he has an interest in it, probably because he is doing linguistics. He has his own way of organising the language, and trying to digest the knowledge after the class.

70 About progress, definitely I can see the progress of Charlie, but I see his progress later. I mean, he made a bigger progress in the written part, I think in the logical side of a language, he did it very well.

**Researcher:** You mean writing?

**Instructor:** No, thinking about something and organising something.

75 **Researcher:** How about Zoey?

**Instructor:** She didn't turn up a lot because she is doing another Master's degree, she doesn't have time to attend the whole term. But based on what I saw in the class, she is already, I think her level can be, at least B2 level I think.



- Researcher:** So you think she is way better than Alba?
- 80 **Instructor:** Yes (assertive), I would say so. Because I can speak with Zoey using some Mandarin, and we just talk.
- But with Alba I have to say something about what she had learned. I think So definitely knows more vocabulary because of her experience in China, teaching English. I think before So coming to the class, she was already very good.
- 85 **Researcher:** But Zoey didn't stay till the end of the course?
- Instructor:** She stayed till the end of the course, she just didn't take part in the assessment.
- Researcher:** Would you say she has made some progress in the class?
- Instructor:** I did a placement test for her, so I thought she was brilliant.
- 90 **Researcher:** Does she give you an impression that she made some improvement after taking your class?
- Instructor:** I think, at her level, it is very difficult to see her improvement in oral Mandarin. I think if you want to see her improvement, you need to give her a written test. For example, in my class she was always interested in the things like (0.2) aw, some typical vocabulary she definitely didn't know before, like some history and cultural background she also didn't know before, but most of the thing we talked in the class, she understood, so I can tell when she paused and took some notes, usually stopped at the place about strange phrases and vocabulary. So I can't see, aw, I think she definitely learned something from the class.
- 95
- Researcher:** Was she very involved?
- 100 **Instructor:** She was quite involved. In the class, although something she already understood, she was still quite involved, because some of the students, especially in the second term, they would look at the phone, and computers in the class, but So was very engaged in the class, probably because she is a teacher, so she knows how to interact with people.
- Researcher:** Do you think your students are looking for different things in the class, they may have different goals?
- 105
- Instructor:** Yes, I think they have different goals, Alba came with very ambitious ideas, she wants to be very fluent, she wants to survive in the next four months in China, she may want to go to attractions, restaurants, and she can understand all the basic Chinese and be able to talk to local people. She just wants to be fluent instantaneously.
- 110
- She is also very ambitious, but she focuses more on HSK exams, she wants to take the exam, and she asked me if the college provides any opportunities for her to take the exam. I think she regards it as kind of a way to measure her Mandarin improvement. I think she is the kind of person who needs to receive encouragement or something. She wants to know whether she has improved. Sometimes you can't observe your own improvement. But probably she thinks HSK exams are kind of objective, to judge whether she got improvement.
- 115
- Tim is a very interesting guy, I think he kind of lives in his own world. He is interested in, he likes Chinese, travelling. He has a dream about working for big corporations, international corporations in China, for his career pursuit, he does Mandarin for that. Another thing is that he is interested in travelling to different places
- 120

and trying different Chinese food in different cities in China. I think this is why he is here for the class. But definitely the career, he really wants to do something based in China I think.

125 Ivy, I think she has a Chinese grandma, she has a Chinese name before in the class, she was given a Chinese name, I think she has some, definitely has some (0.2) Chinese feeling I would say. And Ivy is a very sociable person, good at different kind of social activities. I don't know, probably China is her next step.

**Researcher:** As you know the motivational theories in Applied Linguistics quite well, if I would ask you to comment on what motivational factors your students are driven by, can you do that?  
130

**Instructor:** Charlie is definitely intrinsically motivated.

Alba is very hard to say (1), she graduated from a language university, she is definitely intrinsically motivated, because she really likes the language, but not solely intrinsically motivated. I think she is like 'identified motivated', but more of intrinsically motivated. And there is something about her religious belief as well, she wrote a lot about 'chanting' in her written exercises.  
135

**Researcher:** How about Tim?

**Instructor:** Tim is mostly extrinsically motivated, for the career, future. He has an 'outside goal' there. He is, I was quite surprised to hear that he had never travelled outside Dublin, by joining this programme, he will get a chance to go to a faraway place for him.  
140

**Researcher:** He has never travelled outside Ireland before?

**Instructor:** Not even Dublin. This will be the first time he travelled outside Dublin, totally different culture, totally different things. He chose to go to China as his first destination abroad, I think he definitely has some dreams about the place. He is crazy looking for internships, something about Chinese, marketing things about Chinese, either in China or Ireland, that is something of his first goal.  
145

He told me many times he wants to work for a company, an Irish company, I forget the name of the company, but he wants to work with China. And also he is the person who likes, aw (0.4) When I showed him some video clips, I told him about the names of different cities and different types of cuisines, he seemed to be very interested. And he asked me many times, the route that he will travel when he will be in China in September this year. I think he is attracted to the place, and I can't say he is attracted to Chinese. Why did I say so, because he also signed up for a Japanese class, but just after one lesson, he quit, so I don't think he has specific love in languages. As long as he finds a language difficult to understand, he will just quit, so I think the Chinese business and culture are more charming (than the language) for him.  
150  
155

Sarah is, I think Sarah is. I know Sarah wants to work in a museum specialising in Asian arts, and now she is working for the Science Gallery part time. She really likes culture and arts, she took part in a lot of different activities, doing some arts in Dublin, so she and Alba, they like Peking Opera. I think it is cultural interest. And also political things. She really likes Ai weiwei (a Chinese dissident artist who was under house arrest in China), and she had been to Hong Kong, so I am sure China must have left a very good impression to her, I mean, people there, the food there, so she just decided to travel back, to a different city this time.  
160

165 Ivy is the most complex one, she first came to our class, and she seemed to know everything in the beginning. But in the class, her attitude and motivation changed in the second term. The first term, especially in the last few weeks, you could see she lacked motivation in the class. I don't know whether she is motivated, but I do think that she did some practice while taking the bus, and she tried to learn some Chinese characters as well on the bus.

170

**Researcher:** In the first term?

**Instructor:** Yes, but also in the second term. This habit lasted for the whole academic year, because her grandma is Chinese, this gives her a good reason to learn Chinese.

**Researcher:** If I would ask you to give an overall theme to your teaching in the first semester, like, can I say that the emphasis was on the cultural aspect of the language, because you use a lot of cultural elements to stimulate the students.

175

**Instructor:** Um (0.3) You can say that, but to be specific, the first half of the first semester, I provided them with a lot of information about Chinese culture, but in the second half, we moved back to the language itself, but still we used topics, like, Chinese cuisine, how to order in a restaurant, how to do something in China, so still something related to Chinese culture.

180

**Researcher:** Can you give me some examples about how you made use of cultural element to stimulate your students?

**Instructor:** I remember I showed them some videos about the opening ceremony of the Beijing Olympics in 2008. Surprisingly, they didn't see it before.

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**Researcher:** What kind of vocabulary did you teach them?

**Instructor:** In the very beginning, I gave them very little linguistic knowledge, but I let them listen to Chinese, we put on the subtitle, but we didn't ask them to memorise any vocabulary from the video tape, just wanted to let them get the feeling and the rhythm of the Chinese language and Chinese pronunciation. In the beginning, I was a little bit idealistic, I tried to help them speak Chinese without foreign accents, so, aw, I know it is very difficult, so I tried to show them something holistic in the beginning to, you know, you can say something about (0.3), they can get the feeling of it.

190

I don't know how to say it, when I studied English, some students who were good at English, they had a good sense of the language before they got the grammatical knowledge, so I just tried to introduce the same idea to my students. I just let them watch something, or listen to something before they had any linguistics knowledge of the language.

195

I also picked something from Confucianism and showed them about the Chinese culture, I also gave them something about cultures between different generations, people who were born in the 70s, 80s and 90s. I just want them to avoid having cultural shock when they are in China. So they know what kind of values that Chinese people hold at the moment, I just wanted to let them feel comfortable when they are in China. I spent a lot of time and effort on it.

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So I gave them the videos to show them about the Chinese language, and I also gave them some handout so that they can understand Chinese people's life. Although they are very far away from Chinese, I think it is very good for them.

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- Researcher:** Does your English learning experience affect your approach to teaching Chinese?
- 210 **Instructor:** Definitely there is some influence. When I saw my students, I just remember when I was learning a foreign language in the past, learning English at school. Definitely I understand in what ways, I am very interested in this class, I mean, in the language. I remember when I learned French, I have a language teacher, she just taught us grammar every day, it was very boring with the language. So, I think I kind of
- 215 understand how an interesting class can really motivate the students. For example, for what I learned from my teacher, I tried not to talk to my students in a very serious way, tried to, not joke in the class, but talked in the tone that made students feel comfortable. I tried to build up a relation between the teacher and students, and become more and more like, we come here as the same class and we can discuss. I do
- 220 need to correct their pronunciation, but I tried my best not to be a boring teacher, this is what I learned from my teacher.
- Researcher:** I know that some of your students were not happy with the class at the end of the first term. I talked to some of your students, some of them were actually happy with that. It is very divided, why do you think it happened?
- 225 **Instructor:** You know we have teacher evaluation at the end of the term so we know how we can meet the students' expectation better?
- Researcher:** Yes.
- Instructor:** From what I know, because Alba has a much higher Mandarin level than the others, so it is very difficult to find the balance between different levels in the same class. So
- 230 Alba may think what I taught in the first term did not meet her expectation. But for other students, they needed to improve from the very beginning.
- Those students, like Ivy and Alba may be able to study at an advanced level, but their strength and weakness are different. Alba is very strong at speaking, which is the focus of the first term; but Ivy is strong at listening, which is the focus of the second
- 235 term. Their overall performance maybe the same, but their strong points are different. In the first term, Ivy wasn't as good as Alba at speaking, so I needed to satisfy Ivy's need in the beginning, so Alba wasn't satisfied with the content. And their strong points are the conclusion of my analysis at the end of the year.
- In the second term, I did change my teaching method. It is a new module, we didn't have an assigned textbook, so I had to create the content of the lesson every week. In
- 240 the first semester I made the lesson plan and gave them the handouts every week. But for some students, they are used to learning in a traditional way. They learned from chapter one, two, three, so if I just use a powerpoint, they would say: we need a textbook, and we build everything around the textbook. I thought about it in the first
- 245 term, I got something from the Confucius Institutes, and some materials from China. Comparing with different books, I found that it is very difficult to find a perfect textbook, so I just tried to sort out the materials from two to three different textbook. But since the students wanted to have a textbook, so I gave them a textbook in the second term, this is the second thing that they were not happy with.
- 250 And it is also about how we can put people of the same level together.
- Researcher:** And in the second term you changed your teaching method.
- Instructor:** Not entirely, because we still stuck to the plan that we focused more on writing and listening.

- Researcher:** In the first term, what was the course objective?
- 255 **Instructor:** We had a very general objective, which is to push our students to be able to communicate in Chinese in eight different situations.
- Researcher:** Can I say you changed a lot in your teaching style?
- Instructor:** I did change a lot, because the focus has changed, so I had to change the method. But I also found the problem, if you ask Alba to say something about her holiday, she can say it; but if you told her something about holidays, she wouldn't understand, and the vocabulary is pretty much the same, but she just can't understand. So I think it gives me the impression that we should do more listening. That's why we had more drilling, and I also gave them homework. I asked them to listen to the CDs on the book. Even they already know the vocabulary, I still asked them to listen to it. Because I asked  
260 observed that how much they understand Chinese depends on whether they could find a keyword in the sentence. If they understand one word of the sentence, they can guess. So this time I asked them to do a lot of exercise after class. I also spent a lot of time in the class to let them watch Mandarin practice video clips on youtube.  
265
- Researcher:** Did you recommend some videos to them?
- 270 **Instructor:** In the class, I told them some videos and some CDs from different books.
- Researcher:** Other than doing listening, what else did you do in the second term?
- Instructor:** We mainly did three things in the class, one is listening; the second thing is following the book, the textbook. We learned vocabulary from this book each week, and there is also some teaching on grammar. And we had the writing practice as well.  
275 Most of time I asked them to write something, and they needed to write a short passage, the next week they needed to bring it back and read it aloud, we would discuss in front of everybody.
- Researcher:** Did everyone do it?
- Instructor:** Sarah did it every week, Alba did it every week, Charlie did it every week, but Tim and Ivy just did it sometimes.  
280
- Researcher:** So you gave them the homework every week?
- Instructor:** Basically every week. And Tim and Ivy missed a lot of classes, that's why I just got their homework from time to time.
- Researcher:** They were just absent the class where they were supposed to submit their homework?
- 285 **Instructor:** No, they sometimes disappeared the whole week, I couldn't find them.
- Researcher:** So you just took the cultural elements away in the second term, and focused more on the linguistic features.
- Instructor:** Yes, but sometimes I still taught some cultural things, in terms of vocabulary. In different topics, I needed to introduce some cultural background in the class. I didn't get rid of the cultural thing in the second term, because the textbook has some cultural elements. Although the focus in the second term is listening, you can't separate listening and speaking completely. For example, in your country, how do you greet people, so there is still some cultural elements in it.  
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- Researcher:** Did you give them any assignment in the first term?

295 **Instructor:** No, hardly any.

**Researcher:** What is the percentage of cultural elements in your Chinese class in the first tem?

**Instructor:** 40 percent.

**Researcher:** How about the second term?

300 **Instructor:** 15 percent probably (0.2), they are very ambitious on other aspects of Chinese culture, but the focus of our class is language. If I gave them a topic, they were so engaged in the topic.

**Researcher:** You gave them a topic to discuss?

305 **Instructor:** Um, for example, I introduced them to some generation things, and they would just become very interested in the topic, but we should have done some more language thing, so that is another reason.

**Researcher:** What was the generation thing about?

**Instructor:** We talked about something about the different behaviour and values of those who were born in the 70s, 80s and 90s. And why Chinese people don't have religious beliefs, and we also talked about military training for Chinese students.

310 **Researcher:** What did they say when you told them, say Chinese people have no religious beliefs?

**Instructor:** I forget, I just told them the reason why, and not the reasons, they are my personal beliefs. In the beginning we did worship god, but we changed and worship human being. Sarah was always engaged in this kind of conversation, and Alba too. If you have a ranking at how engaged the students are on these topics, Sarahis probably ranked the first, and Charlie, and Alba and Ivy, Tim is always the last.

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But I changed my approach in the third or the fourth week. I found that there was a problem, they could say something very good, in perfect tones and pronunciation, they also understood it when they read it, but when I spoke it out, they couldn't understand it. So I just realised I should just let them listen to me passively, I didn't even give them time to think about what I said carefully, I just wanted them to listen to it, listen to the whole thing in the very beginning.

320

Because I studied French in university for three years, we focused on grammar, they told us the grammar structure, do this and do that, but I just lost my interest in the language. Two years after I graduated, I wanted to pick up the language again, and I used a software called 'Rosetta Stone', which uses immersion learning: Don't ask why, receive and repeat the picture, you listen to it and you repeat, it is kind of like language drill, but you are in that part, just like throwing yourself into a foreign country, and you are forced to listen to it, use it, without using your mother tongues. So I asked them to, I read a passage, I asked them not only listen to it, but repeat, blindly repeat what I said. And I quickened the speed, and until it reached a normal Chinese pace, then I let them see the text, so they could know how Chinese is spoken.

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335 This is very helpful, I got some feedback from Ivy and Alba, because Alba wasn't very happy with the class in the first term, but in the second term she was happy with this learning method. It is very tough, because I said a long sentence and asked them to repeat, probably they only remember the first few words. She said she got mentally exhausted after using this method, but it does work. She, Ivy, and Tim told me privately (0.3) I couldn't say anything about Tim because he was always absent. But

Alba, Ivy and Sarah told me the method works. So they gave me the confidence that this method works.

340 **Researcher:** Where did you get this method from?

**Instructor:** From two sources, first is I used the software I told you to learn French, the second thing is from the Japanese teacher. She just told us to repeat what she said before giving us the handouts.

**Researcher:** They are quite happy with the second term in general?

345 **Instructor:** I haven't received any negative feedback this term, so I believe that they are happy.

**Researcher:** What was the negative feedback about in the first term?

**Instructor:** About the textbook, and improper class division. Some people talked about writing, they wanted more writing, but as I said before, writing was planned to be done in the second term.

## Appendix 12: Keys for Jefferson transcription symbols used in the study

- 1) A number within () indicate the time the speakers pause (indicated in the brackets) in the middle of the sentence. For example, (0.4) denotes a zero-point-four-second pause (2) denotes a two-second pause.
- 2) A pound sign £, indicates smiley voice, or suppressed laughter.
- 3) > < indicates that the talk between the arrows is noticeably speeded up, relative to the rest of the talk.
- 4) < > indicates that the talk between the arrows is noticeably slowed down, relative to the rest of the talk.
- 5) An equal sign (i.e., =) indicates that there is no break between or within turns.
- 6) Colon : and two colons :: indicate the prolongation of the sound immediately prior to the signs.
- 7) The underlined syllable \_\_\_\_\_ is the one that is stressed.
- 8) Laughter or crying are indicated by letter *h* in brackets, as in (h).
- 9) Words in capital letters indicate that they are pronounced louder than the surrounding talk.
- 10) Upward arrows (↑) indicate that the sentence shifts into higher pitch.
- 11) Downward arrows (↓) indicate that the sentence shifts into lower pitch.
- 12) A left square bracket [ indicates the starting point of overlapping talk, and a right square bracket ] indicates the point where the overlapping talk ends.
- 13) A dash (i.e., -) indicates a cut-off



## Appendix 13: Participant Information Leaflet

**TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN**  
**SCHOOL OF LINGUISTIC SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION SCIENCES**  
**Participant Information Leaflet**

Chung Kam Kwok, PhD. in Applied Linguistics  
School of Linguistic Speech And Communication Sciences  
Supervisor: Lorna Carson, Assistant Professor in Applied Linguistics

You are invited to participate in this research project which is being carried out by Chung Kam Kwok, a PhD student in Applied Linguistics in Trinity College Dublin. Your participation is voluntary. Even if you agree to participate now, you can withdraw at any time without any consequences of any kind.

The study is designed to understand your motivation for learning Mandarin Chinese. If you agree to participate, this will involve you rating your motivation for learning the language during the class. The estimated time involved in the rating activity will 20 minutes.

It is anticipated that the only inconvenience associated with your participation is the time and effort involved in the rating activity. It is hoped that this inconvenience will be minimised by conducting the interviews at a place of convenience to you.

You will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

The contribution you produce in the rating activity and interviews will be anonymous. It will not be possible to associate your opinions with you: the researcher will ask your background information such as my gender, age, and educational background, but not your name or any other identifying information. There will be no key matching letters/numbers/pseudonym to named individuals.

Data from this research project may be published in future. The original rating sheets will be retained by the present investigator, Chung Kam Kwok, for five years, and may be made available to investigators in other academic institutions engaged in similar work.

If you have any questions about this research you can ask Chung Kam Kwok at 0876 118 827. You are also free, however, to contact any of the other people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. In this project, Dr. Lorna Carson, the academic supervisor of the project, will be the only other person who is involved in this study. She can be reached at: [carsonle@tcd.ie](mailto:carsonle@tcd.ie) or +353 1 896 4282