

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班碩士論文

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國際旅遊和遊學經驗如何改變自我概念：

一位台灣成人英語學習者的個案研究

How do International Travel and Study Abroad Experiences Shift  
Identities: A Case Study on a Taiwanese Adult English Learner



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Identities: A Case Study on a Taiwanese Adult English Learner

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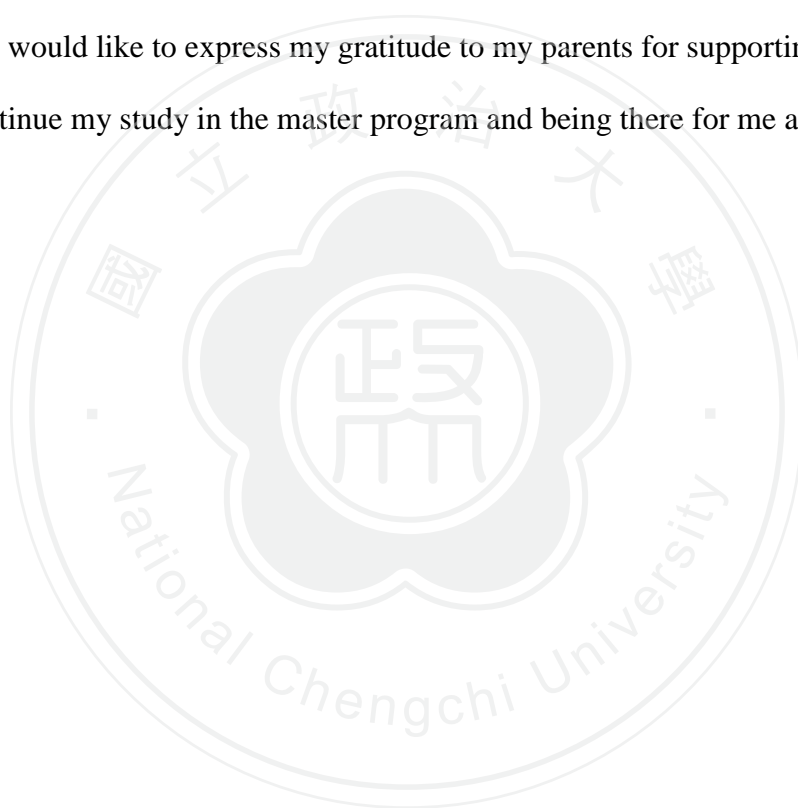
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## 國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班

## 碩士論文題要

論文名稱：國際旅遊和遊學經驗如何改變自我概念：一位台灣成人英語學習者的個案研究

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論文題要內容：

出國遊學或留學一直被視為培養外語能力的好方法。本研究旨在透過記錄一位名為 Wayne 的成年英語學習者到愛爾蘭短期遊學與至歐亞非三大洲 26 個國家進行 139 天國際旅遊，以背包客方式入住各國當地人家中進行文化交流的經驗，以探究短期遊學與長期國際旅遊如何改變外語學習者。

本研究方法採用質性研究，研究資料為日記、文件、觀察、及半結構式訪談，透過 Wayne 的短期遊學與國際旅遊經驗前、中、後的事件，透過分析這些資料，發現他的改變最重要有五大項：語言自我概念的改變、英語學習方法的改變、英語學習態度的改變、對於世界與文化交流的認知與態度的改變、及國家認同自我概念的改變。本研究討論了以下幾點：Wayne 在外國環境遇到的新挑戰、新領悟而最後有了新的學習、以及他的應對態度、自我概念的改變，與人互動所產生的權力關係的議題，社群網站所提供的語言學習與文化交流機會，以及台灣正式英語教育的限制，最後，短期遊學與國際旅遊對 Wayne 對英語學習和文化交流的看法與影響。

這過程中，Wayne 的自我概念、語言學習態度、及想像世界受到挑戰，也不斷有新的領悟與學習，引發他對自己的自我概念與認同，以及自己身為語言學習者與使用者有更深層的了解。此外，國際旅遊後，Wayne 對自己的國家與自己本身在世界上可進行的文化交流努力也產生了新的想法與責任感。

最後，依據本研究結果，對於出國學習與國際旅遊計畫執行者、設計者、教育學者、父母、英語教師與文化交流熱愛者提供相關建議與方向，以期能使出國遊學者與國際旅遊者的旅程更加豐富且有助益。



## Abstract

Study abroad (SA) has been thought of as a great way to help learners develop foreign language proficiency. The main purpose of this study is to explore how a Taiwanese adult English learner called Wayne experienced short-term SA and international trip to 26 countries and how these experiences shifted his identity, personal growth, the methods and attitudes towards English learning.

Qualitative methods were adopted in this case study through interviewing and recording the experiences before, during and after the international trip. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, journals, observation and documentation. Wayne's English learning experiences were explored by categorizing them into three main phases: the experiences before, during and three months after the trip. By analyzing the data collected, the shifts Wayne had were as following: the shift of language learner identity, the shift of his methods towards English learning, the shift of his attitude towards English learning, the shift of his recognition and attitudes towards the Western world and cultural exchange, and the shift of national identity. In addition, five themes were discussed, including new challenges and new realizations, identity shifts, power issues, e-opportunities for learning English and doing cultural exchanges, as well as the limitations of formal English education in Taiwan.

Furthermore, just as Norton's (2011) definition of identity, Wayne's identity and his identification with imagined Western communities were also constantly changed during the trip, which led to his realization of his identity and himself as both a language learner and user. In addition, Wayne's responsibility for his own country was also aroused after the trip because he faced the embarrassing situation that his country was not recognized by some countries. He developed a new national identity as a

confident Taiwanese with the duty of engaging in cultural exchanges with international people.

Finally, pedagogical implications and suggestions derived from the study were proposed for planners of international trips, SA program designers, language educators, parents and English teachers in the hope of making international and SA trips more beneficial and helpful for language learners.



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background and Motivation

Language learning environment has crucial influence on a person's learning and personal growth. With globalization becoming a universal phenomenon (Yu, 2009), many people seek to engage themselves in international language learning environments, believing that being immersed in a target language setting through either a long-term or short-term SA program is the best way to learn an international language. Thus, recent years have seen increased attention to issues related to study abroad (SA) in the literature of second language acquisition.

Research on how studying abroad promotes language proficiency often emphasizes favorable learning outcomes (Mendelson, 2004). Indeed, the number of international students in the U.S. increased by 72% from 2000 to 2014 (Institute of International Education, 2015). This shows that studying abroad is significant for the international students allowing them to make great progress on language development. Many studies have found that SA may bring language learners the benefits of linguistic gains (e.g., Matsumura, 2001; Yager, 1998). Language learners could also have significant cultural and pragmatic development during the SA experience (Siegal, 1995)

However, relevantly less research has examined identities shifts experienced by adult learners through their participation in study-abroad programs and international travel as more attention has been paid to the target language development. Norton defined identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person

understands possibilities for the future” (Norton, 2012, p.45). Therefore, focusing on target language development may be restricted because experiences of study abroad and international travel may shift identities and make people rethink of their relationship to the world and future-self.

### **Purpose and Research Questions of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand one adult language learner, Wayne, who has the determination to put aside a period of time from his career to engage in study abroad and international travel as a backpacker and how such experiences shift his identities from a language learner to a language user. By documenting his experiences and analyzing the data collected from semi-structured interviews, journals, and personal discussions between the researcher and participant, the study aims to develop a deep understanding of his experience. It is expected that the complete documentation and analysis of the participant’s learning and traveling will contribute to a deep understanding of the impact of SA experiences.

The research questions are stated as follows:

How do Wayne’s experiences before, during, and after his international travel and study abroad in Ireland shift his identities?

1. Before the trip, what was the participant’s past experience with English and English learning? To what extent does he perceive himself as an English learner and user? What kind of growth experience does the participant expect to gain from the trip?
2. In the process of the trip, how did his identity as an English learner or user shift? What critical experiences made him feel having personal growth in addition to language development?
3. Based on the participant’s experiences, to what extent does such a traveling and



study abroad experience help develop an identity as an English user?





## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section aims to present the literature relevant to the present study in two parts. The first part focuses on the definition and benefits of study abroad. The second part discusses literature on identity shifts and language development from study abroad and travel experiences.

#### **Definitions of Study Abroad**

Recent research provides some definition of study abroad to distinguish it from migration and tourism. Kinginger (2009) defines “study abroad as ‘a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes” (p. 11). Barkhuizen, Benson, Bodycott and Brown (2013) provide three features of study abroad important to its contribution to second language identity development. They maintain that “(1) study abroad is usually part of a longer term educational process; (2) it is temporary in the sense that the student intends, or is expected to, return home when it is over; (3) formal study is one, but often not the only, purpose” (p. 34). In addition, when speaking of study abroad, Barkhuizen, Benson, Bodycott and Brown (2013, p.35) mention “five important dimensions of variation: duration, educational level, organization, the opportunities for integration and interaction that the program provides, and its purpose.” It is thus clear that SA is a complicated activity. Its benefits may not be clear and certain, although people tend to hold a lot of expectations.

#### **Benefits of Study Abroad Experiences**

Much research discusses the benefits of study abroad, but language

development is the main focus. Some researchers pay attention to the development of the four skills, while others focus only on communication skills such as oral proficiency. Freed (1993, 1995, 1998) and Coleman (1997) focused on language learning in a study-abroad setting and found the growth of language proficiency among students who have spent time abroad and include a descriptive linguistic profile of students who have studied abroad. They found that “gains in overall oral proficiency scores were stronger than gains in test scores on grammar, listening, and reading and an increase in natural exposure to the L2 through a study-abroad experience seems to contribute more to fluency and naturalness of speech than to accuracy and complexity of speech” (p.123). Indeed, Lafford (2006) states that “study abroad contexts would not only broaden students’ cultural horizons, but would also help the participants to become fluent speakers of the language, with more improvement in their target language pronunciation, grammar (morph syntactic) usage, vocabulary knowledge and discursive abilities than those learners who stayed at home and acquired the target language in the classroom”. Barkhuizen, Benson, Bodycott and Brown’s study (2013, pp.148-150) identified three types of benefit: educational or academic benefits, personal benefits, and future-oriented benefits.

There are other purposes and benefits of study abroad including enhanced personal independence, intercultural competence, and academic knowledge and skills. One of the benefits that the participant will experience during study abroad is from staying with a host family. Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2004, p.255) believe that “staying with a host family provides many chances for language learners to use English more often and immerses them to the real international cultural environment.” Other than that, Wu (2013) concluded her study by stating that study abroad not only provides a chance of language and cultural understanding, but also a chance for

reflecting on one's identity. It is often the case that a learner reinforces his or her commitment to their countries after study abroad. The personal benefits do not seem to be discussed enough in literature and are the ones that I am interested in focusing on in this proposed study.

### **Poststructuralist Perspectives of Identity**

For this reason, Norton as one of the most influential scholars in second language learner identity uses the term 'identity' to mean "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2012, p.45). She particularly addressed identity shifts of the immigrant participants in her study. Another important researcher, Barkhuizen and colleagues' (2013, p.18) view is that identities are "socially conditioned and constrained." They also emphasize that "identities develop over time in a variety of contexts and are, consequently, dynamic, multiple and complex." These poststructuralist perspectives of identity suggest that experiences such as study abroad and international travel may lead to identity development and changes.

There are many kinds of identities in a language learner, including national identity, migrant identity, gender identity, social class identity, language identity, ethnicity identity and race identity (Block, 2007). Particularly of interest for this study is language identity. According to Block (2007), a language identity is generally about three types of relationship: language expertise, language affiliation and language inheritance: "Expertise is about how proficient a person is in a language, dialect or sociolect. Affiliation is about the individual's attitudes towards and affective connection to a language, dialect or sociolect. Inheritance is a matter of being born into a family or community setting that is associated with a particular language or

dialect” (p.47). Second language learning may be different in terms of these important characteristics for language identities, but Barkhuizen, Benson, Bodycott and Brown argue that it also plays a significant role in the construction of identities (2013, pp.25-26). Based on the previous studies, study abroad programs may provide holistic experiences as well as linguistic and non-linguistic (identity-related) outcomes that can be useful for the learners’ construction of new identities.

Many recent studies have revealed a variety of language learner identity shifts and reconstruction after study abroad and immigration. For example, Atkinson and Sohn (2013) using qualitative study methods and life story interviews investigating one ethnical-Korean Japanese participant’s (i.e., the second author of this study) 10-month experiences studying abroad as a graduate student in a foreign language program and a student in a dance school. The study reveals the participant’s evolving multiple cultural identities and the way she problematized the concept of culture as she experiences various study abroad environments. Kinginger (2009) using interviews, journals, and emails investigated an American undergraduate, named Alice, and her four-year study abroad experiences as a language learner in France. Alice’s story reveals that study abroad experiences require the participant to negotiate multiple facets of identity, including social and linguistic, as well as gender and class identity and that all of these aspects of identity would be constantly challenged and shifted over the process. Wu (2013) using interviews, diaries and documentation to investigate one Taiwanese junior high school student as she attended a 12-day study trip in the U.S.. The results show that the participant encountered many challenges which led to a deep review of the U.S. as her imagined community. In the end, she also developed her commitment toward her own country and developed a stronger sense of national identity. All of the studies reported here emphasized the fact that

identity is not a fixed category, but one that is with multiple facets and is constantly changing.

### **Factors Affecting the Development of Second Language Identity**

One of the important issues to consider when it comes to study abroad is the factors that make study abroad bring changes. Barkhuizen, Benson, Bodycott and Brown derived critical factors from their three-year individual case studies on ten Hong Kong students' study abroad experiences through theoretical exploration, student narrative studies, and possible influences. Three important factors that can contribute to successful study abroad experience, in their words, are "prior experience of second language learning and use and travel, purpose and goals, program design and preparation" (2013, pp.151-160). They found that students who could express clear study abroad goals often have positive prior experiences of travel and successful international language learning. Such prior experiences help build a positive linguistic self-concept, self-confidence and a sense of independence. The other notion that may be important for study abroad is that of intercultural competence, which learners need to develop in the process and could affect the development of their second language identity. Jensen, Jaeger and Lorentsen (1995, p. 41) pointed out that "intercultural competence is what intercultural speakers are said to have the ability to behave appropriately in intercultural situations, the affective and cognitive capacity to establish and maintain intercultural relationships and the ability to stabilise one's self identity while mediating between cultures." Therefore, in addition to understanding the students' purposes and motivation for their engagement in study abroad, there are many other issues to be explored in the experience and thus more study may be needed.

What is more, based on previous studies on study abroad, the issue of power

may also be one of the factors to influence the identity shift. In Rockhill (1987a, 1987b) studies, the participants' identities as assuming the traditional role of women made them put their own needs as secondary to the needs of their family. In other words, power issues in the family play a role in the participants' language learning experiences. Norton (2000) also made the similar point as all the women in her study were relatively well educated in their own countries before moving to the new country. As their identities in the new context were immigrant women and language learners, the participants' previous education and experience had little social value and provided them with little access to the material resources they desperately sought. The social relations of power thus led to the lack of opportunity to practice English. In other words, power issues are significant factors in the process of study abroad. The previous studies most often reveal challenges experienced by women; relatively fewer studies were on other types of power issues that, for example, may be encountered by male students.

This review of literature reveals that although recent years saw a large number of studies on second language learner identities, there are still many factors to be discovered. There is also little research investigating how identities are shifted from other types of engagement in international experiences, for example a combination of long term multiple-destination travel plan and school-based study abroad experiences. This is the gap that this study attempts to fill.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The method for this study is a qualitative case study approach. According to Borg and Gall (2006), qualitative research is defined as “(a) the in-depth study of (b) one or more instances of a phenomenon (c) in its real-life context that (d) reflects the perspective of the participants involved in the phenomenon.” (p.447) These characteristics are exactly what this study aims to present; that is, developing an in-depth understanding of an English learner’s identity shift in SA.

#### **The Participant**

The study is designed to explore a Taiwanese adult language learner’s experiences before, during, and after his international travel and overseas study trip and how the experiences led to his identities shift. The participant, Wayne, was chosen for the following reasons. First, Wayne wished to be an active language learner; he would create opportunities to interact with international friends, such as hosting friends whom he met on the Couchsurfing website. He also bravely and happily took the challenge of writing his master’s thesis in English, although his department only required a Chinese thesis. This shows that he was intrinsically motivated and always yearning for more opportunities to learn English. This also means that there was a high possibility for him to accomplish his trip and study as planned and for the researcher to document the process as proposed.

Second, Wayne already had a strong rapport with the researcher before the study; he was willing to discuss his ideas and critical English-learning experiences in depth and extensively with the researcher. Furthermore, being in a relationship with

him and planning to engage in the same trip with him, the researcher had no doubt that there would be sufficient opportunities to collect, document, and analyze his experiences during and after the trip. For the above reasons, Wayne was set as the participant for this study.

Wayne was born in the year of 1989 as the youngest son of an entrepreneur in Taipei. At the time of data collection, Wayne was twenty-seven years old who was doing the military service at the Taipei City Government. I met Wayne on the Internet, and we had been friends for 4 years.

At the time, he was informed of a book on traveling around the world with a very low budget; holding a dream of studying abroad, he immediately felt interested in the topic. Thus, he first mentioned the idea of exploring the world in a backpacker way from August 2015 to May 2016.

After that, in order to prove that his English would greatly improve, he kept preparing for the TOEIC test as a pre-test before the travel. This trip was his first overseas study and long-term trip. He was excited about the upcoming international travel to 26 countries and overseas study trip in Ireland. He took pleasure in planning the itineraries, booking the flights, trains and hostels, searching for the hosts of some countries on Couchsurfing website.

### **The Context –From Taiwan to Overseas Study Trip**

The trip includes sightseeing in 26 countries, taking courses from the ABC University (pseudonym) and staying in a host family in Ireland for five weeks, and staying and interacting with Couchsurfing hosts. The 26 countries for sightseeing included Singapore, Thailand, Ireland, Norway, Iceland, United Kingdom, Turkey, Sweden, Poland, Netherlands, France, Morocco, Spain, Italy, Vatican, Sovereign Military Order of Malta, San Marino, Switzerland, Hungary, Romania, Germany,

Czech Republic, Republic of Austria, United Arab Emirates and Malaysia. The courses taken at the ABC University, on the other hand, focused on improving English skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. The courses also placed a strong emphasis on developing the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary as well as communicative skills. In addition, there were some additional classes which offered students chances to learn how to prepare curriculum vitae (CV) and improve the interview skills. Students could also attend the Day Trips every Saturday or conversation classes every Wednesday afternoon to increase speaking chances and develop cultural knowledge interacting with students from many parts of the world and local guide teachers. According to the course introduction, there would be challenging classes, regular tests and assignments and much feedback from the teachers. In the General English Course that Wayne enrolled to, there was an average of 10 students per class (max of 15). This course also immersed students to the home-stay experience from an Irish host family and culture interchange (See Appendix D for Curriculum Description of the General English Language Courses provided by the ABC University). Furthermore, Wayne planned to stay and interact with the hosts from different countries in Europe and Africa using the service provided by Couchsurfing.com websites. Table 1 below is the itinerary for Wayne's trip. The numbers next to the countries refer to the order of the visit. Appendix E is the map developed by Wayne for the trip.

Table 1 Itinerary

Dates	Countries	Planned Activities & English learning opportunities
2015/09/01~09/07	(1)Singapore, (2)Thailand	Sightseeing
2015/09/07~10/24	(3)Sweden, (4)Poland, (5)Netherlands, (6)France, (7)Morocco, (8)Spain, (9)Italy, (10)Vatican, (11)Sovereign Military Order of Malta, (12)San Marino, (13)Switzerland, (14)Hungary, (15)Slovakia, (16)Romania, (17)Germany, (18)Czech Republic, (19)Republic of Austria	(1) Sightseeing (2) Staying with the local hosts found on Couchsurfing.com
2015/10/24~11/30	(20)Ireland	(1) Taking General English courses in ABC University – (See Appendix D for ABC Curriculum) (2) Staying with a host family and other international students (3) Taking afternoon extracurricular classes such as conversation classes, interview skills, resume writing, sports, and guided city tours (4) Attending School Day Trips in Ireland every Saturday
2015/11/30 ~2016/1/12	(21)Norway, (22)Iceland, (23)United Kingdom (the countdown to the new year), (24)Turkey	(1) Sightseeing (2) Staying with the local hosts found on Couchsurfing.com
2016/1/12~1/17	(25)United Arab Emirates, (26)Malaysia, Taiwan	Sightseeing

Note: The numbers next to the countries refer to the order of the visit.

## **Data Collection**

To probe into Wayne's experiences before, during, and after his overseas study trip, four main data collection methods were adopted, including semi-structured interviews, journals, observation, and documentation. It was expected that through adopting these instruments, an image of the participant's evolving identities in the various international contexts could be documented. The following are the procedure and methods of data collection:

### **Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are one of the most important data collection methods adopted for this study. It is a kind of interview method that gives the interviewee a degree of power and control while the interviewer has a great deal of flexibility and a "privileged access to other people's lives" (Nunan, 1992, p.150). It is often carried out with a pre-designed but highly flexible set of questions to probe into the research topic in depth. Many semi-structured interviews were carried out in this study in order to have a deep understanding of the participant's experiences. Each interview (pre- trip, during-the-trip, and after-the-trip) lasted for around 30 to 90 minutes. Before the trip, the researcher designed semi-structured interviews with a highly flexible set of questions to trace the changes of learner identities from an English learner to an English user and to probe into the research topic in depth. The interview questions are presented in the Appendixes. There were other additional follow-up questions in order for the participant to clarify or develop some details.

## **Journals**

There are two kinds of journals to be kept during the visit, including the participant's and the researcher's. First, Wayne kept the journals on the critical experiences every day during his study abroad, recording his perspectives on the events that happened during the visit and study. Wayne chose Chinese to write his journals in order to express himself fully. Through the journals the researcher could understand Wayne's experiences from the insider's point of view. On the other hand, the researcher's journals and notes were mainly about observations toward the participant during the trip, including the participant's changes of identities, personal development, language growth, and cultural exchanges.

## **Observation**

I, as the researcher, was with Wayne all the time during the trip; I thus had the opportunity to see clearly all the events Wayne experienced. I took notes on Wayne's critical experiences as well as his identities shift and his reactions toward the events. When Wayne talked about some critical events and conversations at that moment, I would immediately have the clear pictures. My presence in the trip also allowed Wayne to share his feeling towards some events which interested, excited, surprised or confused him. In addition, I could also understand how he discussed the similarity and differences between two cultures with the researcher or his friends abroad.

## **Documentation**

Besides his journals, Wayne's photos, Facebook posts and a collection of his works such as homework assignments or reports during the 5-week study tour were also collected. Photos taken during the trip were used to help Wayne and the researcher recall every interesting or important event that happened on the days and

his interaction with host family members, flat mates, classmates, passers-by, local people, and school staffs. Some of the documents, such as the program objectives, class schedule, and curriculum content in ABC University, are attached in the Appendix D.

### **Procedures**

The data collection for this study lasted for ten months, from August 2015 to May 2016. Before September 2015, when the participant scheduled to start his 139-day international travel and study trip to Europe, Africa and Asia, a pre-the-visit interview was conducted. During the trip and study abroad, the researcher conducting sets of interviews, and kept journals documenting Wayne's critical experiences, thoughts, and reactions to events. Other documentation like Wayne's photos, travel itineraries, his assignments or reports and all the documents related to this study trip were also collected. In May 2016, four months after the trip, an after-the-visit interview was conducted. His experiences in the Europe, especially the challenges or identity shifts from an English learner to an English user were the focus of the interviews. In these interviews, questions regarding changes of his attitude or views toward English learning, his identities, and his impression of Western cultures were asked. Finally, all the data from the journals, all the interviews, and documentation were gathered for further analysis. There is an overall picture of the procedures for data collection in Table 2:

Table 2 An overall picture of the procedures for data collection

Time	Activity	Focus
August, 2015	Pre-visit interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Previous English learning experiences</li> <li>2. Couchsurfing experience</li> </ol>
Sep.,2015-Jan.,2016	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. During-the-visit interviews</li> <li>2. Participant Journals</li> <li>3. Researcher's Observation Notes</li> <li>4. Wayne's Diaries on Facebook</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study in ABC University in Ireland</li> <li>2. Stay with a host family and local people around the world</li> <li>3. Couchsufing Experience</li> <li>4. Sightseeing</li> </ol>
Feb., 2016	After-the-visit interview	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. identity change and different attitude toward Western world and cultural exchange</li> <li>2. the influence of the study trip experience on the prospect on future life and English learning attitude</li> </ol>
Feb.,2016~May, 2016	Data analysis Interview Recording Transcribing Member checking	Identity shifts toward the study trip experience particularly from an English learner to an English user



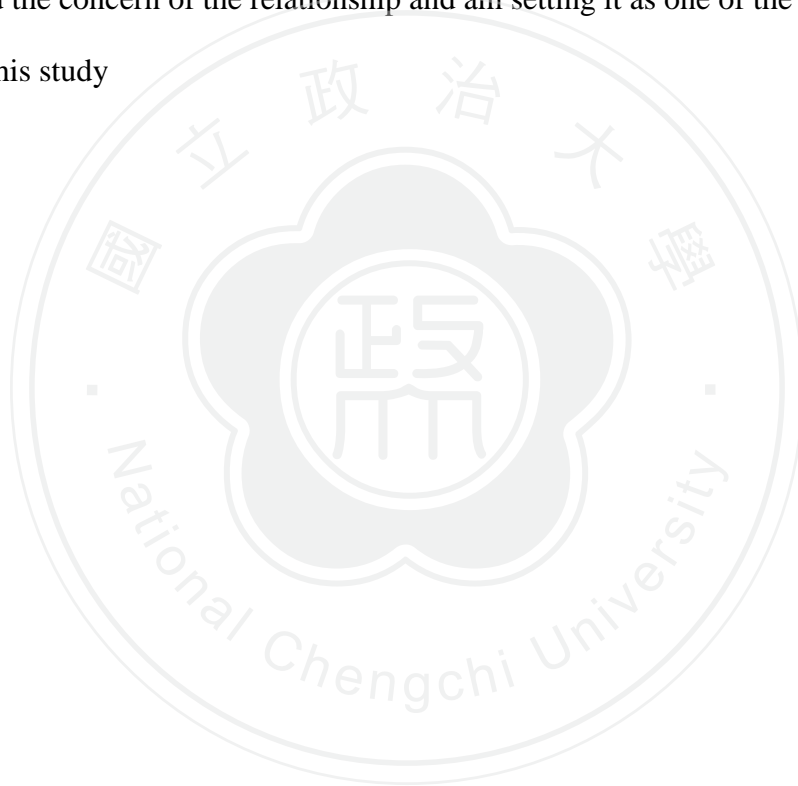
## **Data Analysis**

First, data collected by semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed. During the analysis, the researcher tried to reconstruct the participant's experiences using his journals, the interview data, and the documentation collected. Then the researcher categorized his experiences and critical events related to the research questions. The participant was invited to clarify the interview transcripts in order to ensure trustworthiness of the study. First, the researcher coded the data from the interviews and participant journals separately. After that, when all the agreements on the transcripts with the participant were reached, all the themes derived from the pre-visit, during-the-visit, after-the visit interviews, journals, and documentation were examined and cross-referenced again. During the process of data-analyzing and writing-up of this thesis, the participant was also invited to participate in a continuous conversation with the researcher. Moreover, all the data from journals and interviews were coded according to the three defining characteristics of identity in Norton (2012, p.45): "(1) how a person understands his or her relationship to the world; (2) how a person's relationship is structured across time and space; and (3) how a person understands possibilities for the future."

### **The researcher's role and trustworthiness**

I, the researcher, also engaged in this trip with my participant, Wayne. Although Wayne and I were in a relationship, this relationship would not influence the quality of the data collection because I guarded the trustworthiness and assure the validity of the data through various methods such as member checking and triangulation. The researcher used more than one method such as interviews, documents, observations, photographs and journals to collect data on the same event as well as understand and

capture different dimensions of the same event. The reason why I participated in this trip is that I hoped I could have more first-hand data; furthermore, I hoped I could do immediate member-checking on each event with my participant when he still had clear memory at that moment as well as he could confirm the accuracy of the transcripts and observation notes. The researcher's role on this study during the trip was an observator and a data collector. I had tried all I could not to let the relationship affect data collection and ensure quality and trustworthiness of the data. Nevertheless, I do understand the concern of the relationship and am setting it as one of the limitations of this study



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of this study and addresses the three research questions. The five significant identity shifts experienced by Wayne after the trip.

Q1: Before taking the trip, what was the participant's past experience with English and English learning? To what extent did he perceive himself as an English learner and user? What kind of growth experience did the participant expect to gain from the trip?

#### **Wayne's Family Background and English Learning Experience**

According to Wayne before the trip, his past experience with English learning was not ideal and he did not perceive himself as an English user. As a 27-year-old male from Taipei City, Wayne is the youngest son of an entrepreneur's family. His parents work in their self-run company. He was raised with the deviant ideology "Money is very important. Without money, you can not do anything." Wayne said:

My father just paid lots of money to hire an English tutor to teach me at home, and sent me to an expensive private elementary school and to an after-school language institute. He believed that money could solve all problems. He did not accompany me as other parents when I learned English. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

According to Wayne, his parents did not devote much time to support his English learning as other parents because their work kept them very busy. They themselves did not have higher education backgrounds. They also did not think they could be of much help in terms of helping him with academic work. They just sent

him to an expensive private elementary school which offered bilingual education and to an after-school language institute which was famous for its strictness. The bilingual elementary school Wayne went to did not provide an all-English learning environment as other expensive private schools, and Wayne did not think the school helped him much in mastering English. He told the researcher that he did not have any impression of how English was taught in the school. On the other hand, the after-school language institute provided him with teachers that whipped him up after almost every test depending on how many points he missed. Because of the continual corporal punishment, Wayne developed hatred toward English learning. He described his English learning experience as: “not for interest, but for avoiding punishment” (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015). After elementary school, Wayne did not continue attending the junior high school section of the same school because his parents encountered some financial difficulties at that time and could not afford the school any more. Instead, he entered a public junior high school. He thought the content of English lessons in the public school was very easy in the first two years. At first, he thought his English pronunciation was good, and he loved reading the dialogues from the textbooks. However, in the third year, he started to meet some difficulties because the level of textbooks and teaching became more advanced, and his grades became lower and lower. He knew that the high school entrance exam was coming and he hoped he could receive high grades, so he took leave from school and studied in a study center whole day long to prepare for it. Eventually, he received high grades in English in the entrance exam. However, for him, English was still an academic subject and learning it was only for the tests.

Wayne entered a famous and expensive private senior high school. He liked his first English teacher and felt that she taught very well. He understood perfectly what

the teacher taught him and felt English lessons were interesting. However, due to various reasons, he was given new teachers almost every year afterwards, and he did not like his new English teachers at all. When he had some questions about writing compositions, he would ask other English teachers in the school for help. He said:

Other English teachers taught me how to use transitional words and phrases when writing the compositions and it made my essays look more colorful and full of interesting details. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

After senior high school, Wayne entered Fu-Jen Catholic University and majored in Information Engineer. He rarely used any English for the following four years because the textbooks came with Chinese translation and that he only had to understand programming languages. Besides, there were not international students in his class, so the professors taught the lessons in Chinese. Thus, Wayne said that there was no need for him to study English in university. After university, he entered graduate school and met a significant person, Professor Chang, in the second year. Prof. Chang encouraged all his students to write the thesis in English and to apply for the exchange student program. He told the students they should see the world by themselves and develop a proper worldview. Before that, they should enhance their English ability so that they would be successful applying for the exchange student program. Although Wayne only had one year left before graduation and did not have enough time to apply for the exchange student program, he started to plan a worldwide adventurous trip in a backpacker's money-saving way with the aim to strengthen his four skills of English.

After graduate school, Wayne did the military service in Taipei City Government. His supervisor, Mr. Hua, encouraged him and allowed him to study as long as he finished his work. Wayne told himself that he had to make good use of the

time during military service to study English hard every day for the next TOEIC test. His wish was to pass the exam before he began his career. During the military service, he accumulated 309 pages of notes in English for preparing the TOEIC test. He was gradually aware of the significance of English for the success of his job seeking. He made good use of every minute to master his English abilities. Wayne said:

For me, learning English used to be just a matter of dealing with many kinds of tests. In fact, if not for the tests or a future job, I would not be willing to endure such a boring learning process. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

One of the critical moments for Wayne's English development is obviously the time in graduate school. Particularly under his professor's encouragement, he took the challenge to write his master's thesis in English. He tried his best to study many international journals; although he also encountered many difficulties, he felt that he had strong perseverance and determination to complete them in one year or as soon as possible. Wayne said English was a requirement which allowed him to graduate from school and also indirectly affected his salary in his future job. He was finally willing to learn English without the pressure from any tests or teachers. He said,

Although I am not in love with English, I believe I can feel the charm and practicality of English one day. After all, English is a widely used language in the world, and I know English will play a significant role in my future job, if I long for better working opportunities and faster promotion. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

The next important stage for him in terms of development in English ability was work; Wayne hoped to be well-prepared for his dream job opportunity before it approached him. He said that this thought was influenced by his advisor, Prof. Chang, who would hold a regular reunion for all of his former and current graduate students,

with the purpose of encouraging social contact and sharing between his current and former graduate students. Professor Chang hoped that his former students who had worked for many years could share their work experiences and useful industrial information with those students who were about to graduate so that the latter could have sufficient information and directions to prepare for job-seeking. After chatting with some graduates in one of the reunions, Wayne became aware that one of the most significant qualifications for the position he wanted to apply for was having a remarkable English ability, especially the ability of speaking. Intending to find a job as an overseas sales agent, he began to take the initiative to improve his English ability. He also inquired the senior students how they enhanced their English ability. For this, Wayne appreciated his professor's being the matchmaker for all of his students and the graduates' practical suggestions and information on the current situation in the industry. At that moment, Wayne set a goal that he would also contribute to the school or his junior classmates in the future after he found an ideal job, just like what his professor and senior classmates had done for him.

In terms of expectations of the upcoming trip towards his personal growth, Wayne hoped he could widen his worldview and have the first hand understanding towards the Western world and culture. In addition, he thought this trip might help him see things from a different view point in the future career when he interacted with international customers or colleagues. Wayne said:

I hope I can interact with international people through this trip in person as this may facilitate my interest in cultural exchange and shape my worldview from interacting with various international communities. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Wayne's English learning experience before the international trip is mainly for

the purpose of passing various tests in schools. However, he said that the test-oriented learning experience could not make him feel confident in communicating with others in English. He said that he wanted to broaden his worldview and improve his English abilities, especially the ability of speaking. Therefore, he planned the trip and hoped to have both personal growth and language development after interacting with many international people.

Q2. In the process of the trip, how does his identity as an English learner or user shift? What critical experiences make him feel having personal growth in addition to language development?

In the process of the trip, Wayne's identity as an English learner and user shifted based on some critical experiences, which made him feel having personal growth in addition to language development. There are five significant shifts in terms of language learner identity, English learning strategies, attitude towards English learning, understanding towards the Western world, and national identity.

### **The Shift of Language Learner Identity**

Wayne's shift of English learner identity is presented here by reviewing his learning experience as well as his past experience of "using" English in the family trip abroad and in Taiwan before the trip. Then, the experience of using and learning English during the trip is presented to reach a better understanding of the gradual shift from an English learner to a user. Finally, the identity shift "from being 70% an English learner to 70% an English user," using Wayne's own words, after the trip is also shown here.



## **Before the trip: Wayne's language learner identity**

### ***School experience***

Before the international trip, Wayne thought of himself as more like a learner of English than a user because he spent time learning English for the purpose of passing many kinds of tests and did not have international friends to speak English or have cultural exchange with. Wayne's English teachers during high school tended to spend much time teaching reading, grammar, and vocabulary as separate skills. His English teachers did not encourage students to speak out loud, did not create a natural language environment, nor taught English in an interactive way. In Wayne's mind, writing, speaking, and listening skills were not important. As Wayne put it,

“all of my English teachers emphasized how important English grammar, vocabulary and reading strategies were for getting high scores on the tests, and they did not create any chances to help me develop the skills of writing, listening and speaking step by step. I remembered they always asked me to recite the main points from the textbooks. They seldom introduced Western cultures or festivals to us because they said they needed to spend more time in teaching us the skills needed for answering test questions. For me, English was just an academic subject and a tool for passing all the exams.” (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Wayne told the researcher he was not aware of the importance of English speaking ability as well as understanding Western cultures during his high school in the following excerpt,

Wayne: Before the trip, I thought getting high scores from English tests meant my English speaking would not be a problem if I needed it. All I needed to do was follow my English teachers' lessons and study

English hard, and my parents also only cared about seeing high scores on the report card.

Researcher: So you did not try to use English or speak English with your English teachers or classmates in class?

Wayne: No, it was very strange if I used English to communicate with anyone in class. My classmates would think that I loved to show off, so I never had the thought to speak English during high school because it was not necessary in Taiwan. I could speak Chinese to communicate with anyone including my English teachers.

Researcher: How about learning Western cultures and festivals from your English teachers?

Wayne: Oh, my English teachers would just omit the cultural parts and keep teaching the important parts of grammar and reading for tests.  
(Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Wayne began to have some understanding of Western cultures when studying in graduate school. Prof. Chang and his senior classmates as described before told him that English was an important language and basic requirement for job-seeking in the future. Prof. Chang also encouraged Wayne to broaden his worldview through having a grand tour in Western countries. Wayne kept his professor's words in mind and thought that the time after military service was the best opportunity to go on this international trip.

### ***Trips and reception experiences***

In addition to school experience discussed before, before the international trip, Wayne also had two experiences of using English as a means of communication. First, in 2012, Wayne and I took our seven family members to Sabah, Malaysia. It was the

first time Wayne had to deal with many communication needs in English, such as booking the tickets, communicating with the locals, and being a tour guide in a country which had no English street signs. During the trip, he met a boatman, Jack, who learned English for his job, taking tourists from different countries to some small islands. Jack had to introduce the beautiful islands to the tourists and answer their questions or to provide needed information. Jack was only a junior high school graduate who never had the complete English education, but he knew if he had fluent English speaking ability, he could get high-paid job opportunities. Therefore, he learned English by himself through bravely talking with his customers. His attitude and courage inspired Wayne. Wayne said:

I totally understood Jack's English when I chatted with him on our way to the island in his boat, and this was the first time I could feel relaxed and confident in talking with an international person in English. Knowing Jack's strong motivation and optimistic attitude towards learning English, I was so excited and became motivated to use English as a means of communication. Although I did not know whether I could speak English as confidently and fluently as Jack did, I hoped I could have Jack's courage to speak out without hesitation and fear. At least, I knew my English was not bad. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

During this trip, Wayne also had to deal with different needs and problems of the family members. This means he had to speak English asking the clerks of the hotels and the locals for help. At first, Wayne had difficulties finding the exact words to describe what he wanted to express, and he would ask me for help immediately. At that time, he did not have too much confidence in speaking English. He said he had to be responsible for and take care of his family members, so he did his best to speak English and collect as much information related to Sabah as possible in order to leave

his family members with good memories from this trip. This marked Wayne's first experience.

The second experience happened to Wayne of using English for real-world proposed during the military service. Wayne learned English by himself every day while planning the trip. On the whole, he used English to book all the tickets, to collect the information for the trip, and to contact people all over the world to inquire them about whether or not they could offer their rooms or couches to us to stay overnight during the trip. During the process of all the preparation work, he used a lot of English. He said to the researcher:

Although I still did not like English at that time, at least I was not so afraid of English after reading a great amount of English. I could read English websites and write emails in English faster and more smoothly than before. In the process of contacting people for the international trip, I gradually had the basic understanding of Western cultures which I had not taken the initiative to know before. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Furthermore, before the trip, Wayne also offered a spare room to two international visitors that he became acquainted with through the website - Couchsurfing.com during their visit in Taiwan. These were two ladies from the Czech Republic and Ireland, named Klara and Ruth. During their stay in his home, Wayne talked with them in English and accompanied them to travel around Taipei. They had much experience doing cultural exchange, engaging in language practice as well as cooking exotic cuisine for one another. From then on, Wayne began to have some positive impression for Western cultures and have access to various English accents. He also learned active language learning attitude and authentic word usages from them. He said he could not understand Ruth, the Irish girl, because her accent was

very different from American accent that he had learned before. Sometimes he even needed my translation to understand Ruth. He would ask Ruth to speak slowly so that he could gradually become familiar with her Irish accent and communicate with her in person without other's help. One thing Wayne was happy about is that he developed a lot of new understanding about the unfamiliar Western world which was different from what he had learned from the history textbook. It was also the first time that he used English to help the international friends know his country; in turn, he also developed more understanding of their countries. He had never known that he would have the chance to make friends with international visitors in Taiwan and accompany them to explore his home town, Taipei. As Wayne said,

During their stay, I made every effort to practice English speaking with them, and I was grateful that they were very patient in listening to my imperfect English and telling me the correct usage of words if I asked. From this experience, I found that Western people tended not to correct wrong usages directly, but they would use euphemistical way to let you know the better word or just ignore minor errors if those did not influence their understanding. I was surprised at the very different methods of word correction and attitude between Orientals and Westerners. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Wayne felt excited about this experience of receiving international friends and having native speakers around to use English with and learn authentic word usages from at the same time; moreover, he began to widen his worldview and open his mind to different cultures although he had some negative impression on many Western countries before the reception experience. For example, he had the historical knowledge that strong Western countries had divided up Taiwan into many parts, so he was not willing to take the initiative to explore different cultures before.

### **During the trip: critical events**

During the 139-day trip, Wayne used English any time and any place. My observation shows that English was the primary communication tool for him from morning to night. In the morning, he had breakfast with his hosts and chatted with them in English. After breakfast, he might go out with his hosts or visit the cities by himself. During the day, he needed to interact with local people or international tourists in order to ask directions, order meals, take the metro, make purchases, and visit some tourist attractions. Returned to the hosts' home, Wayne would cook dinner with his hosts, talk about his day tour or his up-coming travel plans, or his hosts would share their travel experiences or different cultures with him. At night, Wayne had to contact other hosts for places to stay when traveling in their countries. During the five-week study abroad, he focused on his English learning at school; he took the initiative to learn English from the teacher and the textbook and seized the chance to immerse himself in social interaction with international classmates and his hostess whom he called "host mother" after class.

He said he was indeed a frequent English user during the trip. For example, when Wayne went to the supermarket in many Western countries, he began to recognize the English names of food and ingredients. Going shopping in supermarkets was his favorite thing to do during this trip, because of the chances to communicate with local people and actively inquire them about how to use different ingredients into their traditional or festival cuisines such as those for Halloween and Christmas. Wayne's host mother in Ireland, who did not prepare breakfast for him and seldom spent much time interacting with him, took Wayne to the biggest TESCO Supermarket in Dublin by car, and introduced him to her friends who worked there. She also told him how she used different parts of the meat or some vegetables into

various Irish cuisines. On the way home, she even told him stories and put out decorations for the upcoming Halloween. At that moment, Wayne said he not only learned the language, but also used the language with native speakers a lot as he immersed himself in a natural English-speaking environment.

Wayne used English completely to communicate with the local people and immersed himself in social interactions, including defending his rights if he was treated unreasonably. For example, when he took the train to Switzerland, a businessman who sat in front of the luggage rack told Wayne not to put the luggage on it. This is the conversation between Wayne and the man in this event:

Business man: Hey, you can't put your luggage here. It makes me feel uncomfortable and I can't lay my seat back if you put your luggage on the rack.

Wayne: Hey, please see the words on the rack. It says 'luggage rack,' so why can't I put my luggage here? If you feel uncomfortable sitting in this seat, you can change your seat. Or do I need to ask the conductor for help to make sure if I can put my luggage on the 'luggage rack?'

Business man: O.K., fine, you can put it here.

Wayne: Thank you. (During-the-trip observation, October, 2015)

After Wayne's communication with the man in his imperfect English, the man had to yield. Wayne said:

During the trip, I gradually found that I needed to communicate with Western people in a more straightforward way, even if my English ability was not good enough. I just spoke out without fear, even though I did not have time to think about what words I should use to tell the man. (During-the-trip interview,

October, 2015)

The only language he could use to communicate with people in the world was English. If he did not speak English to communicate or deal with everything abroad, he could not survive and would not have positive interaction or relationship building.

Wayne said that he hope he could improve the fluency of his English speaking ability, just like his French flat mate, Helena, whom he met and stayed with for five weeks in his Irish host family. She spoke English fluently without fear or any worry about grammatical mistakes. Under Helena's encouragement to speak English bravely with her, Wayne had a great interlocutor to speak English with every day and he could immerse himself in the Western lifestyle by means of school and host family during the five weeks of study abroad. In the natural English environment, Wayne said:

I did not have to worry about grammatical mistakes or any pressure from tests.

All I needed to do was bravely speak English in dealing with all the difficulties I encountered in the foreign countries. (During-the-trip interview, October, 2015)

For example, when Wayne was ready to check in at the Swedish airport, something that upset Wayne happened. The dialogue between Wayne and a check-in clerk is reproduced here:

Check-in clerk: I need to make sure that you can place your luggage into the aircraft hold in a horizontal way and that your luggage is not oversized, so please do it again.

Wayne: Hey, Miss. Your airline company did not have this rule limiting the passengers' methods of putting their luggages. As long as I could put my luggage inside the hold, you should not interfere with my way, or ask me to pay for the extra check-in luggage. If



you want me to do what you ask, please show me the rule shown on your website. At least, I did not see any related rule before today. I also took your airplane flights in the other countries, but the check-in clerk there did not ask me to do this. Why do you give me extra demands?

Check-in clerk: O.K., fine, your luggage is very big, so as long as you are sure you can put your luggage inside the hold, and I will let you go.

Wayne: Sure. (Putting his luggage inside the hold.) See?! I can do it.

Check-in clerk: O.K., here is your passport. Have a nice trip.

Wayne: Thank you. (During-the-trip observation, October, 2015)

Wayne told the researcher that as long as he followed the airline companies' rule, he was not afraid of the staff's deliberately putting up obstacles in front of him. He said that he did not dare to use English to defend his right before. But during the international trip, he had no choice but to speak English to deal with all the difficulties he met; he felt it necessary and natural to speak English out loud for his own right in the international settings.

### **After the trip: identity shift**

After returning from the international trip, Wayne began to study English for the TOEIC test and prepare for job interviews conducted in English. He finally got the offer as a domestic sales engineer of an international company, and he said "I finally have the freedom to learn and use English as I wanted without test pressure." He had to read English emails and all kinds of information related to his job. He also talked with me in English at home. At job, he took the initiative to chat with his international colleagues in English, too. In addition, Wayne said he would actively ask the international tourists he met whether they needed help if he saw they looked nervous

or got lost on the street. Because he received so much help from others during the trip, he wanted to help international tourists in need as a return. He also kept contact with his international friends through Facebook or What's App all in English. After the trip, the chances of using English increased. He became used to using English in his life and work environment. Without the pressure of tests and with the international work environment as well as his interests in American TV series with both English and Chinese subtitles, Wayne thought that he had more chances and motivation to speak English and understand the world. He would also actively pay attention to the international news and use English to chat with his international colleagues at their dinner reunion after work.

He considers himself more like an English user than an English learner now, as the excerpt below shows.

Researcher: Wayne, how do you consider yourself as an English user or a learner now?

Wayne: I feel more confident, and sometimes have a little sense of superiority and happiness when communicating with my friends in English. I enjoy using English and getting cultural information through the communication with my international colleagues or watching American TV series. Now, I feel I am 70% an English user. You know what!? Some of my colleagues are overseas sales engineers. I think they are lucky to have many chances to take business trips many times a year. I hope I can have the chance to work overseas one day. For this purpose, I have to keep improving my English proficiency. (After-the-trip interview, April, 2016)

Because of the international nature of the work environment, Wayne's own

interests in English, and work demands, his identity as an English learner in school under the pressure of tests in the EFL context gradually shifted into the identity as an English user during and after the trip.

### **The Shift of English Learning Strategies**

#### **Before the trip: Wayne's non-interactive English learning strategies in Taiwan**

Before the trip, Wayne learned English step by step and learned the language piece by piece, rather than holistically, moving from vocabulary, phrases, grammar, to sentences. He used traditional learning strategies to learn English for tests. He learned English with methods of continuous recitation and language drills. He did not spend a lot of time speaking and listening English because passing most of Taiwanese tests just needed good reading skills, a large amount of knowledge about grammar, and reciting a large amount of vocabulary. He said:

My English speaking and listening abilities were terrible and needed more improvement. Taiwan, being an EFL language setting and exam-orientated learning educational system, I had a hard time having a chance to improve speaking and listening. In addition, I did not have a successful English learning model for my English learning at home or school. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Wayne mentioned that his brother, Tom, told him that he spent seven years studying abroad, only playing around the whole time and did not study at all. It is a complete waste of his parents' money. Wayne also felt angry at his brother's laziness and not looking for any job after many years since his study in New Zealand. This made Wayne develop negative impression thinking that studying in Western countries would make a person develop his brother's laziness. Wayne said:

I had a bad impression on study abroad and I did not think studying abroad could improve my English ability, because I thought my brother's English remained poor after the experience of study abroad. I thought study abroad was just a waste of money. People just play all the time, like my brother. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

Consequently, Wayne said he had never looked forward to having the chance to learn English through study abroad.

**During the trip: Wayne's observations learning and using English naturally with friends and host families**

During the trip, Wayne used English to communicate and he learned useful English word usage from his international friends by inquiring or listening to what they said. Wayne told me:

I had no choice but to speak English for survival and interacting with international people around me. Most of my strategies in English learning during the trip were just using it. I could learn new English expressions as well as improve my listening skill and speaking fluency naturally in the process of interacting with international people every day. (During-the-trip interview, December, 2015)

He also felt shocked and excited about learning about some special and cool English learning methods through actively creating the chance to expose himself to a natural English speaking environment. For example, when he visited Poland, he found the daughters of his hostess, Nina and Ania, were very used to meeting international visitors who stayed in their home, and they would always chat with the visitors in English. The hostess, Agnieszka, was an English teacher, and she encouraged her daughters to practice their English speaking with the visitors. She believed the girls

would cultivate their open-minded attitude towards different cultures and worldview in the process of helping and chatting with international guests who she invited to stay with them from the website 'Couchsurfing.com.' Wayne said Agnieszka trained her daughters to be very independent in terms of taking care of their own daily life and to have the willingness to help international guests using English. Through these efforts, they created a natural English speaking environment where various international people were around them. The two girls told Wayne that they were used to seeing and staying with many international people the whole year, and this really helped them speak English better and more fluently than their classmates. Wayne mentioned,

After I went back to Taiwan, I would actively create an English speaking environment this way too. I believed it would allow me to make more progress than learning English through traditional learning methods. (During-the-trip interview, October, 2015)

Wayne said he would use more interesting and interactive English learning methods to improve his language abilities so that he would have the opportunity to get his dream job overseas. Wayne had the deep feeling that the natural language learning environment really played an important role in the two girls' successful, confident and fluent language abilities even if they did not have experience of study abroad. He said:

The two Polish girls thought that English almost became their second native language and they felt they were English users, not just learners. Furthermore, their family relationship and interactions with one another are like friends, not parents and children. Their thoughts are very considerate and mature, which are very different from Taiwanese teenagers'. They even taught me how to make Polish sandwiches and recommended well-known tourist attractions or the

places that local people visited most, and traditional Polish cuisines. I am very happy to see how teenagers from other countries learned English. They said they were lucky and very grateful for their mother for creating fantastic chances for them to acquire English naturally and easily. (During-the-trip interview, October, 2015)

### **During the trip: The interactive and student-center learning experiences in the ABC University**

In addition to interacting with his host family, during the five weeks studying in the ABC University, Ireland, he also immersed himself in the natural learning environment. He experienced student-centered and interactive teaching methods in class, and he had a lot of English learning practice through task-based group activities, oral presentations; there were also reading strategies, listening training and writing activities. He felt refreshed and was amazed by all the interactive language learning methods which he had never experienced in Taiwan. His teacher, Chris, would divide the students into several groups for doing all the learning activities. Wayne seized every chance to actively interact with his teacher and classmates. Chris taught him English by integrating the four skills into the whole lesson, which made Wayne feel different from his past learning experiences. Wayne had lots of chances to practice English speaking and listening in class. There was one learning activity which left Wayne with a deep impression. He described it while showing a video that his classmate filmed for him during his presentation:

When we finished reading and learning the lesson about the weather, Chris asked us to take turns reporting weather forecast on stage with our partners. I was extremely nervous, but I was happy that I could do it confidently. I never thought I had the chance to experience the forecast job of a weather anchor in

English. I showed the video to my host mom, and she said I performed well and did not look nervous. Ha-ha, it was really a special and natural learning experience related to real life. If my English teachers in Taiwan could have offered me chances of oral presentation, real conversation practice, integrating four skills into the class activities, and emphasize students' fluency instead of grammars and correctness, I believed my English could be better and I would be more excited and interested in learning English. (During-the-trip interview, December, 2015)

Wayne tried his best to participate in class activities actively and would raise his hand to ask questions. For example, he would voice his objections when Chris was not aware of Wayne's position as a newcomer of the class and conducted an activity based on the lessons that he had taught the other students previously. The dialogue between Wayne and Chris is reproduced here:

Wayne : Chris, can you explain the word meaning for me?

Chris : Oh, my gosh! You don't know the meaning of this word? Come on, it's simple (with a contemptuous and impatient tone).

Wayne : Sorry, I didn't take the lesson when you taught this word last week because today is my first class here.

Chris : You can guess or ask other classmates.

Wayne : But if I don't know the meaning, I can't continue the word activity.

Chris : OK. I tell you. (During-the-trip interview, November, 2015)

Because of the humiliated impression left on him, Wayne could not persuade himself into happily interacting with Chris on the day trip on the Saturday after this event; instead, he decided to only talk with other classmates and avoid interacting with Chris. Nevertheless, Wayne said he chose to ignore the negative feeling and put

in full and energetic participation when attending Chris's class.

### **During the trip: The interesting extracurricular classes and school day trips**

In addition to the fixed schedule every morning, there were abundant and practical classes in the afternoons, such as conversation classes, strategies of dealing with interviews and writing resumes, guided city tours by one teacher, movies and sharing reflections, and outdoor sports such as soccer or rugby. The school would hold Day Trips every Saturday for international students, and Wayne said:

The day trip is a useful extracurricular chance. It encourages me to practice my English speaking abilities with classmates, the team teacher and local students of ABC University. (During-the-trip interview, November, 2015)

The various free classes in the afternoon also attracted Wayne's attention, particularly the conversation class every Wednesday afternoon. Alan, the teacher of the conversation class, was very active and energetic; he made students feel relieved to have free talks in class. Wayne said Alan's teaching methods were quite novel and inspiring, making him always look forward to the conversation class.

Alan gives me relaxed feelings, and he always uses encouraging and energetic tones to guide the students to speak out loud with confidence and no fear.

Alan's energetic teaching style is totally different from Chris's. Alan is a cool language teacher that makes me feel confident to just speak out loud and I nearly forget that I am not a native speaker in the positive and natural language speaking atmosphere. (During-the-trip interview, December, 2015)

Wayne enjoyed free talks with the classmates of different nationalities, as well as learned different cultures and different responses on the same issue from worldwide people. Although Wayne had difficulty immersing himself into his Western classmates' social circle in the beginning, he still tried his best to build good



relationships with them. Wayne told me that he amazingly felt that he made great progress on English abilities after frequent participation in classes or extracurricular activities and interaction with the members of his host family. Wayne's host mom and French flat mate also told him about their observations of his obvious English improvement.

### **After the trip: shift into active and practical English learning methods**

After coming back to Taiwan, Wayne preferred using interesting and interactive English learning methods because he wanted to sustain a long-term English learning motivation and continue to make effective progress. He hoped he could acquire English happily and without pressure. Many of Wayne's international and Taiwanese colleagues told him that they acquired English naturally and improved English proficiency through watching American TV series, developing positive attitude, and seizing all the chances to practice English with their international clients or friends bravely. Wayne said:

I begin to watch American series with Chinese and English subtitles when I have free time, and I often talk with my international colleagues in English after work. I try my best to actively search for interesting learning resources and seize all chances to speak English. I also have regular dinners with my international colleagues, and we would engage in both language and cultural exchanges during the dinner. (After-the-trip interview, April, 2016)

Sometimes, Wayne said he would naturally use the English expressions which he learned from the American TV series into his English conversations.

In addition, he kept in touch with his international friends through What's App chatting application. He keeps good relationships with all the people who hosted him during his trip through chatting online. He even attended the reunions of

Couchsurfing members held in Taipei where he met many international friends. He found he could use authentic English expressions during and after the international trip, and he felt highly motivated to learn English through interactive and interesting methods. He said he would not use boring and suffering methods to learn English anymore. After the amazing experiences of interactive language learning methods in this trip, Wayne was willing to continue using the language learning strategies actively which facilitated his learning interests.

### **The Shift of the Attitude towards English Learning**

#### **Before the trip: passive and reluctant attitude towards English learning at school**

Before the trip, Wayne told me that he held a passive attitude towards English learning because his purpose was passing tests. He learned English not for fun, but for not being punished by his parents and teachers. For him, English was just an academic subject, and he was forced to study it by his parents and teachers.

Furthermore, Wayne said he did not use or study any English during university because he said he finally got rid of the horrible pressure of English tests; he did not want to study it at all if his undergraduate teachers did not require him to study. His attitude towards English learning was forced, reluctant and passive. However, as mentioned before, Professor Chang in graduate school encouraged Wayne to write the thesis in English and to develop a worldview through study or travel abroad. This was why Wayne started to plan a worldwide adventurous trip in a backpacker's money-saving way. His goal was to strengthen the four skills of English in the all-English natural environment.

### **During the trip: Some significant events which influenced Wayne's English learning attitude**

During the trip, Wayne was inspired by some significant events which developed his open-minded and positive attitude towards English learning.

First of all, Wayne was amazed by the positive effects of Polish parents' active creating immersed language learning environment at home. The Polish family members that he met during the trip regarded English as a necessary and natural communication tool which they would use almost every day at home. This is very different from Wayne's own family which is literally without any English or international experience. Wayne said he would try to create similar experience at home when he has his own family.

Second, Syrian refugees that Wayne accidentally interacted with taught him some good lessons about learning English. He mentioned two events which astonished him a lot:

I have two impressive and sad events about Syrian refugees I experienced during the trip, and those events influenced my thoughts for the practical values of language learning and left me with deeper shocks towards the world of Middle East. Before the shocks, I did not want to pay any attention to care about the wars and the Syrian refugees of Middle East, because I thought it was not my business. (During-the-trip interview, Jan. 08, 2016)

The first realization is that English could be a survival tool. Wayne's Turkish friends, Enes and Hayal, told him that their neighbor, Frank, was a lucky Syrian because he could speak English and a little Turkish. "With the language, Frank could rent a very shabby apartment and find a part-time low-paid job more easily than other Syrians who just could beg for money on dangerous roads." Enes and Hayal would

teach Frank Turkish when they had some free time so that Frank might have more opportunity to find better jobs to support his family in Turkey. Wayne was surprised and said Frank probably had never known that language abilities would be important survival tool to support his family when he escaped from his country to another country.

The second event happened when Wayne took Emirates Airlines from Dubai to Malaysia, and met a Syrian refugee, Rafiq, sitting next to Wayne. In the beginning, Rafiq began to say the only English word 'Syria' that he knew to Wayne and shared his chocolate and Coke with Wayne. Knowing that Rafiq was from Syria, Wayne felt shocked and had mixed feelings. He could not imagine that a Syrian refugee who had nothing would be willing to share his only food, chocolate, with a stranger. However, Wayne could not communicate with Rafiq at all because of language barrier. Wayne found that Rafiq seemed to be taking the flight for the first time because he did not know how to turn on the TV or change channels, so Wayne sought the help from the only flight attendant who could speak Arabic. Wayne said:

Later, I knew there was free Wi-Fi service on the plane; I immediately turned on the Wi-Fi and used the Google Translator to communicate with Rafiq in English and Arabic. Rafiq told me he was the only family member who had escaped from Syria and he showed me the wound on his arm shot by a bomber in Syria. He said he really wanted to save his wife and kids from Syria one day, but he had no money at all at that time. He needed to leave Turkey for a country whose official language was Arabic because he could neither speak English or Turkish nor find a job to survive in Turkey. (During-the-trip interview, Jan. 08, 2016)

When Wayne told me this experience interacting with a Syrian refugee, he said

he learned a life lesson that was so profound that no textbooks could have impressed him as much. He told me that this was undoubtedly the most special cultural experience for him. He also saw that the more languages the Syrian could speak, the better job opportunity they could have. Wayne said he suddenly felt that he was really lucky to live in a country without the war and with a complete education system. There were many people who learned English for making a living, such as his Turkish host, Hayal's Syrian neighbor and the boatman he met in Sabah, but Wayne learned English for passing tests. He felt humiliated and embarrassed because of this realization. These experiences motivated him to use English frequently. Although he was already accustomed to using English as his daily communication tool during the trip, he anticipated that he could maintain the habit of frequent English using after he goes back to Taiwan. Wayne said:

Having a natural language environment is really important to me. When I was in foreign countries, English was the only language I could communicate with the locals; I could speak fluently and confidently. Also, I started to pay more attention to international news after I met Syrian refugees, and my world was not just limited to Taiwan and China anymore. (During-the-trip interview, Jan. 08, 2016)

In addition, he began to ponder on why he was afraid of speaking and learning English before. After reflecting the experiences of staying with the Polish family and interacting with Syrian refugees, he had deep realizations and thought that he should be more positive and active in creating English learning environments for himself in Taiwan after the trip. He mentioned that he always kept the maxims in mind: "Chance favors the one with a prepared mind" and "Success is always for those who are well-prepared." He knew if he hoped to get his ideal job and get promoted in the

future, excellent English ability was essential and required. He said “My attitude towards English learning shifted from passive to active after the unique and profound experiences.” (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

### **After the trip: Pursuit of English fluency**

After the trip, Wayne met many international and Taiwanese colleagues whose attitudes towards English learning and using are practical and active without fear or hesitation, and they pursued much more fluency than accuracy when using English. The result of their positive learning attitude is very obvious in that they could speak out louder and more confidently than Wayne. Wayne tried to change his test-oriented English learning attitude and tried not to be afraid of making mistakes when using English. In addition, he pursues fluency when interacting with international friends rather than accuracy.

One of his international colleagues from Nicaragua is Abraham; his English is very fluent and he is eager to learn Chinese. Abraham hopes he can find an interlocutor to do language exchange or immerse himself in the Taiwanese community, but not many Taiwanese colleagues wanted to speak both English and Chinese with him. Wayne decided to help Abraham. Wayne said:

Abraham and I have regular dinner meetings and talk with each other in both English and Chinese after work on Wednesdays and Fridays. Our chatting topics were very extensive and interesting, from accurate usage of Chinese and English expressions to different festivals and travel experiences. This made me enjoy talking with Abraham in English, and we became good friends now.

(After-the-trip interview, April, 2016)

Wayne often actively talks with his international colleagues from different countries when he meets them in the company. He is not afraid of actively talking

with international people, and he regards every encounter as a great chance to practice and improve his English fluency. He even actively says 'hello' and helps international tourists on the streets. He did not dare to do all of these before the trip. He finds that it is not difficult for him to talk with international people in Taiwan now; he says he has the sense of satisfaction and achievement, and he enjoys every moment of speaking English.

### **The Shift of Understanding and Attitudes towards the Western world**

#### **Before the trip: Negative attitude towards the Western world**

Before the trip, Wayne had a negative impression and very little understanding about the world, and he did not have the motivation to develop an understanding at all. In Wayne's family, there was not any family member talking about international events or caring about the world. Wayne said:

In my mind, I only cared about Taiwan. I did not think I had to know the world. The only impression of the Western world was when Taiwan was excluded from worldwide events by Western countries. I did not have any prospect for the Western world or engaging in any cultural exchange. (Pre-visit interview, August, 2015)

#### **During the trip: Open-minded attitude towards the Western world and culture**

Through this trip, Wayne said he now believes that in any country, there would always be people who are passionate or indifferent, positive or negative, as well as good or bad. For instance, most of the French people he met were indifferent to strangers when he asked for directions and wanted to use the toilet of any restaurants or stores. However, he mentioned that he also met passionate and friendly French

people such as his flat mate, Helena, in Ireland and his French host, Sebastien, in Paris, who influenced and helped him a lot during his trip. In particular, four events led to Wayne's shifts into an open-minded attitude towards the Western world and cultures during the trip. These happened when he traveled to Iceland, Turkey, Salzburg, and London, respectively.

**(1) *Iceland: Are local people really as cold as ice?***

Before taking a trip to Iceland, Wayne's Norwegian host told him that Icelanders were cold as its country's name, Iceland. However, when Wayne visited Iceland, Icelandic people that he met were friendly to him. For instance, Wayne lost his cellphone one day during the trip in Iceland. Wayne told me:

I originally thought cold Icelanders would not help me send back to Taiwan if they found it, but an Icelandic girl spent time looking for my name on Facebook and sent back my cellphone to Taiwan immediately. This event and many of the nice local people who helped me in Iceland, including my Icelandic host, local tour guides and the enthusiastic staff at the tourist information center made me totally change my impression on the coldness of Icelandic people. (During-the-trip interview, December, 2016)

Wayne also said he found local Icelandic people were willing to share their cultures with international tourists and actively develop an understanding of other countries through mutual interaction.

**(2) *Turkey: Why did Muslim women wrap themselves up so tightly?***

In Turkey, Wayne's Turkish friend, Hayal, said that not all Turkish people are Muslims. In other words, religion is a personal choice, but some women would be forced to follow the religious rules that their husbands' or fathers' family demanded



and to wrap themselves up with black clothes – or hijab, in their whole lives even if they do not want to. Hayal did not like Muslims because of many dark sides she could not agree at all. She also felt lucky she could choose not to become a traditional Muslim woman although she still had to follow and respect their basic rules in Turkey. Wayne found it interesting that most Muslim women are very beautiful and they always wear heavy make-up. Muslim women are not allowed to expose their hair, neck, forehead, and body, sometimes even their faces, except the eyes. Wayne said:

Oh, my god! I even saw a woman who followed the very strict Muslim rules and wore a niqab or a headdress that covered her face, showing only her eyes. I could not believe my eyes and felt surprised how the woman could bear hiding all her body inside the black clothing even in the extremely hot weather. What is more, one thing that impressed me was that before Joanna and I entered the mosque, the Muslim asked Joanna to cover her hair with a piece of clothing. Of course we followed their rules. However, I saw a Western woman who was not willing to cover her hair was dispelled from the mosque. (During-the-trip interview, Jan. 08, 2016)

Wayne told me that he respected every religion and their rules although he could not approve them all. He said that “When in Turkey, do as the Turkish people do.” Wayne thought of not getting himself into trouble, and learning to respect one another was the best policy to stay safe when traveling in different countries. Wayne said that he was so fortunate to be born to a democratic country and to have the complete freedom to choose and do what he wants to do in Taiwan. This event shocked him a lot, but he still tried to maintain open-minded and respectful attitude towards different cultures.

**(3) Salzburg: Why is a nine-year-old allowed to use a sharp knife and drink beer?**

When traveling in Salzburg, Austria, Wayne's host, Alex, was a physiotherapist. Alex's wife is Julia, and they have a daughter Sophie and a son Philip. Wayne found that Alex not only has a successful career as reflected by his gorgeous house, but also gave a unique type of education to his son and daughter that Wayne was not familiar with. For example, Alex does not think that it is dangerous to allow his nine-year-old daughter to use the knife in cutting green peppers and carrots; instead, he would encourage Sophie to be Wayne's helper when Wayne cooked dinner for them. The following excerpt is the dialogue between Wayne and Sophie when cooking together:

Sophie : I can do my best to help you although my English is not good enough. Please tell me how I can help? I can do things like cutting or washing vegetables.

Wayne : Sophie, thank you for your help. But are you sure you know how to use the knife? It's dangerous.

Sophie : Yes. I always help my mom to cut vegetables when she cooks. I like to cut the vegetables. Please tell me how small pieces you need me to cut?

Wayne : OK. But be careful.

(During-the-trip interview, November, 2016)

In the process of cooking for the family, Sophie also happily shared a lot of things with Wayne about her family and school life. Wayne said he was shocked that this nine-year-old Austrian girl was not afraid of speaking English and interacting with international people. To Wayne's surprise, Sophie showed her interest in Taiwanese cultures and used her limited English vocabulary to ask Wayne about Taiwan.

Sophie : OK. I will. Wayne, where is Taiwan?

Wayne : I'll show you Taiwan's location on the map later. Taiwan is a very small country in Asia and near China.

Sophie : Is Taiwan also near Japan? My dad told me about Japan before.

Wayne : Yes it is. You are smart.

Sophie : Ha, thank you.

(During-the-trip interview, November, 2016)

Alex told Wayne that he believed that his daughter would master at least five languages in the future as Sophie always took the initiative to learn and use new language and speak out loud bravely. Wayne found Alex gave his kids a lot of freedom to try everything they wanted or were interested in. For example, Alex allowed Sophie to drink a small cup of Austrian traditional beer when he took us to the brewery. There was still something about Alex's parenting that surprised Wayne. Alex insisted that his children should go to bed before 8 p.m. so that the children will have full energy for the next morning. Alex hoped his kids could have a happy learning experience towards everything. He would also plan family overseas trips in order to broaden his kids' worldview. Wayne mentioned he felt that "Alex seemed to be an open-minded and easygoing father, even though he also strictly demanded the kids to organize and clean their rooms by themselves." On the second evening at Alex's home, his son Philip did not follow his father's request to clean his own room, so Alex did not allow him to eat dinner regardless of his crying or apology. Wayne felt shocked about this event and said:

Most Taiwanese parents would think that having dinner regularly is more important than anything else for children who are growing. For example, Taiwanese mothers, acting out of their natural maternal love, would secretly

keep some food for the kid without letting their angry fathers know.

(During-the-trip interview, September, 2015)

Wayne said all of Alex's ways of educating and nurturing his kids were very different from his parents'. His parents used a very traditional Chinese way to raise their children, with too much protection and limitation. Wayne's father would easily forgive the child's bad behaviors, and his mother did not allow him to use a dangerous knife before 11 years old. They did not encourage Wayne to immerse himself in an active English speaking environment because they thought his English was not good enough to deal with difficulties and that it was very dangerous to let Wayne have access to international strangers. Therefore, Wayne felt he grew up in the over-protected comfort zone provided by his family. Wayne reflected after interacting with this Austrian family: "The way that Alex educated his children could make them develop positive and active attitudes towards the international world and various cultures." Wayne said he hoped he could strike a balance between Western and Oriental cultures, and he would also share his own country's cultures with his international friends.

#### ***(4) London: Why is Christmas Day important for Western people?***

Wayne celebrated Christmas and the new year of 2016 in London, U.K. We stayed in a Londoner's Victorian-style old house for eleven days. Our host, Amir, was a teacher in an elementary school, and he had a strong British accent. Amir lent us guide books for London, as well as recommended and showed us how to get to some tourist attractions in London. He left the key to us and asked us to help take care of his two cats when he went back to his mom's home during Christmas holiday. Because Amir's mother is from Iran, Amir cooked Iranian cuisine and made Iranian tea for us. He also suggested that we shop around the international and multicultural

stores near his home, especially cheap fruit and vegetables from street vendors – at the low price of one pound for a basket. In the country with high living expenses, this information from Amir made Wayne excited and astonished. Because there was not any transportation service on Christmas Day, Wayne and I chose to stay at Amir's home and prepare a big Christmas dinner for ourselves. Wayne said:

Our host, Amir, told us Christmas Day meant 'family reunion day' for them, just like Chinese New Year for us. They would get together with their family and have a big Christmas dinner during Christmas holidays. Amir said we would find that there were not many people in London during that period of time. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

Wayne felt surprised and said "Before the trip, I did not know that Christmas Day meant so much for Western people." Wayne told me that he never celebrated Christmas Day in Taiwan because he thought it was a Western holiday and Christmas meant nothing for him.

Staying in London brought Wayne other surprises. For example, during Wayne's stay, Amir renovated his house by himself, all the way from repainting the walls and the high ceiling, installing the new bathtub and sink, to changing the carpet runners in the center of the stairs. Wayne asked Amir why he did not ask plumbers or construction workers to do the work for him, Amir responded and said that his father had taught him how to renovate their house on his own when he was young and that it was not a difficult task for him to renovate his house. Wayne said:

How different the ways Western people dealt with tasks in their daily life. In Taiwan, I would just call workers or plumbers to repair and renovate my house. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

The other surprise surprise for Wayne is males' cooking and preparing their

own meals. He said,

In Western countries, boys or men were used to making their own meals, but most of Taiwanese males thought this was women's task and seemed to prefer buying cheap, delicious ready-made food at breakfast places or convenience stores everywhere. After I experienced Western breakfast cultures, I appreciated my good fortune and the convenience to have many breakfast places on the street in Taiwan. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

Wayne also he felt quite impressive by the British accent and those old buildings which have an antique flavor and old-fashioned fair. He said British protected their old buildings very thoroughly and almost in a respectful way. In the process of talking with the British, Wayne said he felt that they were very proud of their historical sites, cultural heritages and modern buildings. Besides, he thought he broadened his view by experiencing London as a city of the ethnic melting pot that is able to integrate multi-cultures and different races.

Wayne celebrated the New Year of 2016 in London by attending New Year activities such as watching the splendid firework show as well as did a countdown with people from all over the world on the London's landmark 'London Eye.' What is more, he entered Westminster Abbey to take part in the Londoners' worship activities, including the group prayer and singing hymns. He enjoyed taking the convenient underground tube and walking on the street because he could see many beautiful buildings, historical and cultural constructions that astonished him a lot, including Tower Bridge, Buckingham Palace, Houses of Parliament, Big Ben, British Museum, Tate Modern, Coca-Cola London Eye, Victoria and Albert Museum, Covent Garden, China Town, and Greenwich. All of these gave him cultural shocks. He was particularly surprised by the fact that there are no conflicting feelings when the

ancient and modern buildings are put together, making it very easy for him to fall in love with this city.

Wayne said he could feel that the British people love to talk about their country with confidence and pride as well as respect for multi-cultures. He finally could understand why I strongly recommended U.K. as a country worthy of visit.

Wayne said if he had not taken the trip and actively talked with the people from the world of many parts, he might still have some misunderstanding towards other countries and people. After many chances of interacting with the people from different countries, Wayne changed his attitude. Wayne said:

I am more and more open-minded towards different cultures now, including those from the West, Muslims, Asia, and Africa. I enjoy doing as the locals do when I travel. I had many cultural shocks in the beginning of the trip, but now I do not easily feel astonished by new cultures. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

#### **After the trip: Open-mind and passionate attitude towards the Western world**

After returning from the trip, Wayne said he kept his open-minded attitude towards the Western world and culture. He maintained the habits of a few Western eating choices such as eating vegetable and fruit sandwiches at lunch time. Besides, Wayne believed that making breakfast by himself could not only assure healthy ingredients but also save money. Most important of all, having healthy eating habits could help his family to lose weight gradually and avoid the diseases of high blood pressure and diabetes. Wayne learned to make various kinds of breakfast from his international friends during the trip, such as cheese sandwich with lettuce and slices of tomato, hot banana or apple oats with milk, cereal with milk, whole wheat toast with egg and bacon, homemade yogurt, and fruit and vegetable salad with Japanese

dressing or yogurt dressing.

In addition, he started to care about international news. Before the trip, he seldom talked about any news events related to other countries. Wayne said:

“I was not interested in the events, festivals, cultures, people, TV programs, and topics about any other countries before. Nevertheless, I started to actively tell others about my opinions about international countries after the trip, especially the ones I had visited. I am happy to share my international travel experiences with people, and feel excited about events related there.

(After-the-trip interview, April, 2016)

What is more, Wayne said he even often cooked exotic cuisines which his international friends taught him and acquainted himself with international food ingredients. In addition, he was totally satisfied with Taiwanese cuisine before the trip, but now he would combine Western and Taiwanese cuisine into one meal. He used to have the misunderstanding that Western people always ate unhealthy and fatty food. After eating like a Westerner, he now understands how greasy some food in Taiwan can be. He learned to make light meals by himself and became healthy and stayed in good shape and spirits. Furthermore, Wayne said:

After work, I often eat dinner with my international colleagues and exchange languages and cultures with them through chatting. I get used to telling jokes in English and thus understanding more about Western humor through their ways of thinking. Because I have had many experiences getting along with international friends, I am able to gradually think in the way that Western people think on some issues. I also learn English from a variety of interesting sources which I knew but had never tried before the trip. For example, I have great interest in watching American TV series and happily learning useful



English expressions through Chinese and English subtitles at the same time.

Moreover, I often naturally speak out new English expressions that I learned from American TV series. (After-the-trip interview, April, 2016)

Having the experience of the shift of understanding and attitudes towards Western world and culture from negative to open-minded, Wayne was happy. He thought this trip broadened his worldview and cultivated a comprehensive way of thinking.

### **The Shift of National Identity**

During this trip, Wayne continuously thought of the same question related to his national identity, especially after many international people said to him that they did not know where Taiwan was or that they misunderstood Taiwan as a province of China or Thailand. Two events particularly stand out which made him have some doubts about who he was and his nationality. These events happened in Morocco and in Iceland, respectively, and are discussed below.

#### **Morocco: I was stopped at the national gate of Morocco.**

In September 2015, Wayne arrived at an African country, Morocco. It is very difficult to get the Moroccan visa for Taiwanese people. We needed to fill out the application forms and sent them to Moroccan Embassy in Japan at least two months ahead of arriving in the country. With the confirmation emails two months later, we thought we could enter the country when the flight landed, but we were stopped, taken to an office. We had to accept the officials' inquiry as we could not show the visa and the officials were not sure if Taiwan is a country. Wayne said:

It was my first time to be stopped entering a country owing to my nationality.

Although I kept telling them that Taiwan is a country and that I applied for

Moroccan visa two months earlier, they did not listen to me. They finally called their embassy in Japan to make sure that they had our application forms. I also found they checked and searched for the name lists of visa confirmation from a pile of papers instead of on a computer, and most of the officials did not speak English when asking us questions. We did not understand Arabic or French. Later, one official who understood English appeared to help us. After one hour, we were allowed to go out of the customs and saw our Moroccan hosts, Wail and Gokçe. (During-the-trip interview, September, 2015)

Here, Wayne said he found that he was positioned as an unrecognized Taiwanese when his nationality was denied or questioned. He knew Taiwan as a political entity was not admitted by most of the countries in the world, but he did not know that he would be treated impolitely due to his nationality. Before this trip, he was always proud of his identity of a Taiwanese in the confine of Taiwanese's own patriotic atmosphere.

After hearing Wayne's experience at the airport on the phone, his Moroccan friends immediately came to the airport to take him to their home for fear that Wayne would be shocked by many possible inconveniences, including the language barrier, dangerous and inconvenient traffic, and many sheeps killed on the trucks. Our Moroccan friend, Wail, and his Turkish girlfriend, Gokçe, introduced their country and the upcoming festival, the 'Festival of Sacrifice' or 'Lamb Festival', also known as 'La fete de mouton' in French. On the Lamb Festival, every Muslim family would kill a sheep and they would serve the first to the poor, the second to friends and relatives, and the rest for themselves. Wail and Gokçe also reminded the researcher not to wear short skirts in the capital, Rabat, because Muslim people would speak ill of me if I exposed my thighs. Wayne said:

This was the first time we had to carefully and strictly follow the local's conservative dress code and avoid offending the taboo of different cultures.

(During-the-trip interview, Sep. 25, 2015)

Wayne said he could not do something great to change our national position, but he could do his best to make his international friends know more about his own country. Wayne is sure that keeping doing the cultural exchange is important for his own country.

**Iceland: 'Father, why do so many international people visit our snowy country?'**

When traveling in Iceland, Wayne enjoyed the amazing natural landscapes in Iceland. He took local tours to see the Northern Light 'aurora' and the Golden Circle, including many spectacular waterfalls, Icelandic horses, and geysers in the Pingvellir National Park at the boundary of the North American and Eurasian Plates. Wayne said he was particularly impressed by Leo, the driver of the tour as Leo shared a discussion between him and his father with the tourists when Leo was 25 years old: "Once I asked my father why so many people came to our iced and distant country. My father's response was that Iceland is a spectacular wonderland and paradise for many international people, and we have amazing natural landscapes that they do not have in their own countries." (During-the-trip interview, November, 2015)

With his father's response and pride toward Iceland at that time, Leo thought he should be proud of his own country and cherish the amazing land which God gave all the Icelanders. This was why he decided to stay in his hometown to be a local tour guide as well as introduce his beautiful country to international tourists. Although the weather in winter is extremely bad and not suitable for living and staying outside for a long time, his father told him that hundreds and thousands of international people chose Iceland as their must-go traveling destination in winter because of the abundant

and unique winter natural landscapes!

Wayne said he could feel the Icelanders' strong national identity. Their nation's location being very far from other countries, there are very few citizens and the weather is not suitable for staying outside for long hours in winter. They are not discouraged and defeated; instead, they seek hope and chances and try to overcome the difficulties to bring more people to the country under the arduous environment.

Wayne also mentioned that:

The Tourist Information Center offers very complete and exhaustive tourist information, maps, local tours information, weather forecast, or travel guide booklets, as well as thoughtful and hospitable service with a big smile. Every time I have questions or difficulties, I could get immediate help from the clerks. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

Before the trip to Iceland, many people told him that people in Iceland could be cold in their interaction with visitors. However, this was not Wayne's experience at all. He said:

I do not think Icelanders being as cold as their country's name. For instance, my lost cellphone with a student card inside was found in the heavy snow by a local Icelandic, and he asked his daughter to search my name on Facebook and sent it back to Taiwan for me. When I found my cellphone was gone, I never thought I could take it back. However, the miracle just happened to me, and I had better impressions of Icelanders after this event. (During-the-trip interview, January, 2016)

Because of the stimulus feeling that he experienced as an unrecognized Taiwanese in Morocco as well as the positive response and solution to the terrible weather the local Icelanders made, Wayne realized the importance of cultural

exchange. Accepting the fact that people do not always know his country, he decided to actively engage in more cultural exchanging activities with all the international people that he met. He insisted firmly that he has the responsibility to actively do more cultural exchange with international friends and also to broaden his own worldview. Wayne hopes that Taiwan would be gradually known to all the people in the world, especially in terms of the people's friendliness and many of the country's tourist attractions.





## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The previous chapter has presented a discussion of Wayne's English learning experiences, significant shifts on his identities and learning attitudes and strategies before, during, and after his international trip. This chapter addresses research question three: Based on the participant's experiences, to what extent does such a long-term traveling and study abroad experience help an adult EFL learner develop an identity as an English user in the international context?

First of all, two kinds of identity shifts are discussed: The shift of language learner identity and the shift of national identity. From Wayne's story, we can then conclude that identity shifts through international traveling are resulted from new challenges and power issues. The two themes that are related to shifts of identity in this study are presented as below and include (1) reality check through new challenges, new realizations and new learning, (2) power issues and how the participant deals with them.

#### **Two Themes that are Related to Identity Shifts**

##### **Reality check: New challenges, new realizations and new learning**

Before the trip, Wayne had some imagined communities (Anderson, 1991) towards the Western world in his mind. He expected to have a reality check during the trip. He also thought that he might encounter many new challenges or struggles in the process of interacting with the people in an international context. His reality check happened when these were new challenges, immersing himself in his Western classmates' social circle. That his teacher, Chris, questioned his English ability with a contemptuous and impatient tone also upset him, to the degree that Wayne refused to

chat with his teacher during the trip. This situation is similar to Alice's French learning experience in Kinginger's study (2004). Alice made repeated attempts to gain access to social interaction with the French classmates, but she was rebuffed and excluded (Kinging, 2004). Despite this unhappy episode, Wayne still struggled to make himself take initiatives in learning useful language and cultural knowledge from Chris because Wayne thought he should overcome any struggles and cherish the chance of participation in the international context and gain valuable experiences. Wayne's reaction to his teacher supports the notion that Wenger (1998) called "participation"; that is, learners produce their identities through not only their participation but also their non-participation of community of practices. This is similar to Katarina's and Felicia's experiences Norton (2000) mentioned that participating in their language courses because their teachers did not acknowledge their identities and imagined communities.

Wayne had much new learning from the new challenges that he met in the trip. His new learning included both positive and negative sides. He found some experiences or events against his imagined native speaker communities. For example, he learned that not all Western teachers are as active and energetic as he had imagined before the trip. In fact, there are still many boring Western teachers. He also learned that not all Muslim women have to wrap themselves up with black clothes or hijab, in their whole lives and that Turkish people can have personal choices to be Muslims or not. What is more, Wayne also learned that his host mom did not have much influence on his language fluency because she did not actively spend much time interacting with Wayne during his five-week stay. His experience of staying with a host family was not like Ingram's (2005) contention that home-stay has always been a preferable place for language learners to stay in during their SA trip.



In contrast, some realities Wayne experienced confirmed his conception of the imagined communities. Before the trip, although Wayne developed little understanding about Western world from travel guide books, and only his teacher and I had shared some Western travel experiences with him before, the following experiences and impression he had during the trip were the same as what he had imagined or what his teacher had told him before the trip. For example, Wayne's teacher told him that he had to defend his own right in a straightforward way if he was treated unreasonably or badly in Western countries. Wayne spoke for his own right bravely when Western staff in Swedish airport gave him extra demand on the way of measuring his luggage size. This shows that one really needs to defend one's right in the international context.

Wayne always looked forward to experiencing interactive learning in English class when studying abroad in a Western country, and his teacher, Chris, really integrated four skills into his interactive teaching in ABC University. He was happy that this student-centered English class is the same as what he had thought before the trip.

He came to the realization that some Western communities only existed in his imagined mind. After interacting and staying with local friends during the trip, Wayne learned that respecting mutual habits and actively understanding different cultures can reduce struggles and conflicts. For instance, Wayne felt surprised that his host mother did not get up early to prepare breakfast for him every day, but he was not angry afterward when he understood that Western children usually make breakfast by themselves. All the realizations made Wayne have new learning from the chance to access Western communities. His realization and learning on experiences of language learning and cultural understanding in this trip show that there would likely be new

challenges, new realizations and new learning. Language learners need to keep an open arm to embrace all of the new experiences.

### **Power issues**

As a non-native speaker in an international context, Wayne also encountered challenges and conflicts related to power relations. Before the trip, Wayne was afraid of speaking English with international people, not to mention defending his own right in English in an international context. However, he conquered his fear and took courage to deal with the unfair events he encountered. The power relations between Wayne and the businessman who told him not to use the luggage rack and between Wayne and the airline staff who gave him additional demands on luggage were two of the most obvious events. The issues of power in these two events were similar; there were unbalanced power relations between a fluent target language speaker and a Taiwanese backpacker without good English proficiency. In Norton and Kamal's (2003) study, the students hoped that they had good English proficiency because this global language which induces more power, as well as gain more opportunities for their future lives. For Wayne, however, he managed to defend his own right regardless the unbalanced relationships. This shows that it is possible for non-native speaker to exert their rights, if they choose to do so.

Many researchers mentioned the importance of power relations in SLA (Norton, 1995, 2000 ; Norton and McKinney, 2011; West, 1992). In Norton's (1995) study, a Canadian immigrant, Eva, chose to keep silent when her Canadian colleague, Gail, teased her of her ignorance for the cartoon character, Bart Simpson. This illustrated the power relations between Gail as a native language speaker and Eva as an English learner were unequal because Eva's social identity was an immigrant in the Canadian workplace. The participant of this present study, Wayne, also had the similar

experience happened on the first day of class in ABC University, Ireland. Because of the previous humiliated impression which Chris left on him, Wayne could not persuade himself into happily interacting with Chris on the day trip on Saturday; instead, he decided to only talk with other classmates and avoid interacting with Chris during the whole day trip. This would make Wayne lose the chance of inquiring the related information about the day trip. In Norton's (Norton, 2000) study, Martina and Eva were silent when interacting with their colleagues in workplace because they were positioned as 'inferior immigrants.' But, this was not Wayne's experience.

For Wayne, his identity in the international context was a foreign language learner and an inferior Oriental tourist without good English proficiency; while the businessman, his teacher and the staff of the airline company are often regarded as proficient English speakers. Because Wayne was an adult English learner with brave personality as well as having the strong sense of justice, he chose to defend his own right even if he knew his English proficiency was not good enough. The reason why he was able to do that was due to his better language ability at that time as well as he was angry then. When one wanted to defend oneself, he probably forgot about grammar and he focused on more fluency than accuracy. Drawing on all the studies mentioned above, a conclusion may be made that issues of power exist frequently in an international context, but the reactions to power relations might be controlled by the language learner. That is to say, power relations could not only become obstacles of learning a language or cultural understanding if one chooses to let them. Language learners could actually use their courage to speak out loud through defending their rights with native speakers.

## **Identities Shifts**

Two important parts of Wayne's identity shifts are discussed below:

### **The shift of language learner identity**

Wayne regarded himself as an English learner before the trip because he was “forced” to learn English in order to pass various tests or meet the requirement for graduating from school. In his view, he learned English through unauthentic textbooks and from teachers who probably did not have innovative training themselves in a teacher-centered classroom. Therefore, he did not have motivation to actively look for interlocutors to practice English speaking and did not have the intention to understand Western cultures. He said he only hoped he could speak more fluent English after almost 20 years of learning. Instead, he was always exposed into a test-oriented learning environment and his teachers also had teaching pressure based on the course outline planned by the Ministry of Education. After he had a chance to participate in Western cultures and lives, to learn and to use English naturally in international contexts, his language identity gradually began to shift from being an English learner into an English user. Wayne regarded his language identity as a 70% English user during and after the trip.

Compared to receiving formal English education in Taiwan, Wayne experienced totally different language teaching and learning strategies in Ireland and had many chances to improve his English proficiency naturally during his trip. Wayne had many interlocutors to speak English with every day and everywhere in the international and natural English speaking context. He did not have to worry about that he would be considered strange while in Taiwan when speaking English in different countries, so he could naturally and happily use English to communicate with people as he wanted.

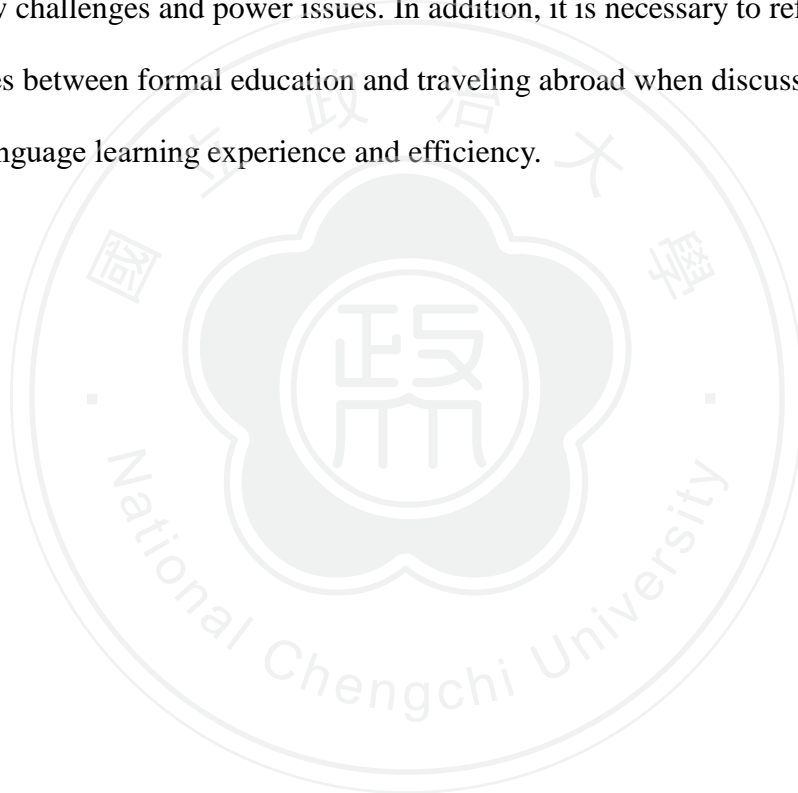
Although Wayne had complaints about the formal education in Taiwan, it is important to point out that school English actually was a basis for him to continue his learning.

### **The shift of national identity**

During the trip, Wayne met some difficulties which led to the shift of his national identity. Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl and Liebhart (1999) make the point that ‘national identities are generated and reproduced through discourse’ and that ‘there is no such thing as one national identity in an essentialist sense, but rather that different identities are discursively constructed according to ... the degree of public exposure of a given utterance, the setting, the topic addressed, the audience to which it is addressed, and so on’ (Wodak et al; 1999, p.186-7). For example, Wayne and I could not enter into the country gate of Morocco in the beginning. Wayne felt shocked and humiliated at that moment, and he asked himself that who he was in the world and why the Moroccan officials did not recognize his country. This shifts his national identity. All of a sudden he became aware of the relationships between him and his country. On the contrary, when he visited Iceland, he saw Icelanders’ strong national identity toward their country. They did not complain the bad fortune of their country’s natural environment; instead, they did their best to make more international tourists desire to visit their beautiful country and to understand their Icelandic culture actively. Compared with Icelanders, Wayne thought he should actively introduce Taiwan to the international friends he met during the trip, and he should proudly show the great tourists attractions, amazing Taiwanese cuisine and friendly people of Taiwan through photos on the Internet and he took before. Again, Wayne felt the need to cultivate his intercultural competence and became more aware of his country and his own responsibility to his country. When interacting with people from other cultures, he experiences certain obstacles that were caused by differences in cultural

understanding between two people from different cultures. Such experiences motivated him to acquire skills that could help him to communicate his point of view to a person who has a different cultural ethnicity and background. Thus, he began to actively do mutual cultural exchanges with his international friends. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that study abroad has the potential to change a language learner's view of themselves and their country.

In sum, we can conclude that identity shifts through international traveling result from new challenges and power issues. In addition, it is necessary to reflect on different natures between formal education and traveling abroad when discussing the participant's language learning experience and efficiency.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The present study explores how international travel and study abroad experience can influence Wayne's attitudes and methods of English learning as well as shifts of his identity. In the previous chapters, by interviewing Wayne's experiences before, during and after the international trip, the shifts of his identities that this trip brought to him, as well as the issues of power, his new realizations are discussed. This chapter begins with a summary of the study. Then, implications, limitations and suggestions for further research are put forward respectively. Finally, a conclusion follows.

#### **Summary of the Findings**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the international travel and short-term study abroad influence identity shift of a Taiwanese adult English learner called Wayne. It focused on Wayne's English learning experiences and his interaction with international people before, during and after his trip. Qualitative approaches using interviews, participant posts and diaries on Facebook, journals, observation and documentation were used to investigate the shifts this trip brought to Wayne.

The results of the study revealed that Wayne had a lot of changes on his identity, attitudes and methods of learning English and cultural exchanges. The process of the changes made him become more mature than before when he faced diverse difficulties, challenges and struggles in the international context. He changed from a passive foreign language learner without his own motivation for English learning and doing cultural exchange into the person who was willing to actively learn English through interactive methods and understand different cultures with an open mind. In

addition to his identity shift, Wayne's responsibility on his own country was aroused after the trip because he faced the embarrassing situation that his nationality was not recognized by some countries. To sum up, we can find the similar changes and personal growths such as the challenges, struggles and responses in various countries, new realizations and new learning, continuous changed identities, the revised attitudes towards different cultures, the non-participation, and bravely defending the rights in a foreign language context.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The present study contributes to the understanding of the following concepts: shifts of identities and attitudes resulted from reality checks and power relations in different countries, especially in the contexts of taking an international trip and study abroad. The findings of the present study can be used to extend the understanding of a language learner's shifts and reconstruction of identities and imagined communities both in an international trip and in a short-term study abroad.

The finding of this study highlights the importance of experiencing a wide variety of international contexts and interactive teaching methods for English learners. Although Wayne had complaints about Taiwanese English education, it is important to recognize its contribution to Wayne's language development, allowing him to continue his learning through the trip. Unfortunately, not everyone has the chances of engaging in real participation abroad like Wayne. If a learner can have strong awareness and agency like Wayne, we can expect that he or she would actively transform himself from the formal school English education into real international participation no matter in Taiwan or abroad. Wayne created a lot of chances of full participation, so he has the opportunity to jump from the limited function of English taught by the education in Taiwan to active use of the language. The challenge for



educators then is to make sure that learners could continue creating learning opportunities for themselves and not consider the English education they received in school is all there is to be learned. Language teachers in classrooms are suggested to expose students to multiple-cultural learning experiences, to cultivate students' intercultural competence and to create interactive learning environments.

Before changing teachers' traditional teaching methods into innovative ones, the government should also offer teachers new training and learning. It is necessary to make sure the teachers' English proficiency and cultural understanding are sufficient. The purpose of English class can be made more interactive and practical, creating a student-center learning environment. Teachers could also create some interesting topics to give students more speaking chances and language activities in class. That is, The teachers in Taiwan may need to put more emphasis on students' fluency than accuracy. The goal is for students to regard themselves as both a language learner and user.

In addition to the identity changes, this study shows that Wayne's national identity was aroused by two events happened in Morocco and Iceland. Interaction with different people will lead to the relations of power. Hence, studying abroad and taking an international trip provide not only language learning but also cultural exchange opportunities. Students may need to know how to properly deal with social relations of power in English when they study abroad.

Moreover, Wayne encountered many challenges or struggles and developed some personal growths during the international trip. Language teachers and SA program organizers can offer some advice and suggestions to students in advance in order to make their trip more colorful and with fewer culture shocks.

Finally, Wayne kept diaries and shared travel experiences on Facebook, as well

as used some social network such as Couchsurfing or What's APP to keep in touch with international friends during the trip. Through keeping diaries and recording emotions, the participant and the researcher both could understand the process of identity changes and gain a deep understanding of significant events which influence them. It is thus suggested that all the students who participate in SA experiences need to make good use of these communication tools.

A less obvious issue to consider from the result of the study is that e-opportunities played a significant role in Wayne's English learning and cultural exchange and in the international trip. He could easily search for international people on the websites and actively interact with them in English. These chances could not have been reached without the new digital tools. Indeed, interacting with the English world is no longer a difficult task. Nowadays, social networks and Internet are very popular and convenient resources to learn English or access to English native speakers. E-learning through multimedia and innovative methods plays an important role in arousing students' learning motivation. Active English learners did not feel satisfied with traditional and teacher-center learning methods anymore; instead, they took the initiative to look for authentic, interesting and interactive methods to learn English. Active learners might also seek for good opportunities to have access to native speakers for language and cultural exchange. Social networks such as Facebook, Couchsurfing, and What's App are very popular with people around the world. Harrison (2009) mentioned that 'Web 2.0 technologies are presenting new opportunities for developing diverse online learning environments and enhancing interactivity, participation and feedback between students, their peer groups and teachers.'

Wayne looked for his hosts in different countries through the website Couchsurfing.com, which offered many chances to connect with local people and inquire them if they were willing to spare a room for him to stay with them during the days when he visited their countries. The aim of the website was for cultural exchanges with local people. Wayne thought it provided a really great chance to have access to local people and to understand their cultures as well as to have a natural language environment; in return, he could introduce his own country to them and cooked Taiwanese cuisine to repay their kindness. During the trip, he could use What's App to dial free calls to contact his Western friends. After the trip, he kept in touch with them and cared about one another through Facebook. Borau (2009) mentioned that the e-opportunity of learning English is readily available in numerous forms on the Internet and "what learners of English need is the chance to actively produce language and the chance to use English as tool of communication. This calls for instructional methods and tools promoting 'active' learning that present opportunities for students to express themselves and interact in the target language." Borau's study also showed that the usage of the social network 'Twitter' can train communicative and cultural competence with target language speakers in the world.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study has some limitations. First, this case study only shows one participant's experience and identity shift, although many previous studies on similar SA theme also used limited number of participants. If more participants were observed, it might have gained more enriched findings. Second, a more comprehensive finding could be drawn if more methods of collecting data such as the researcher's detailed daily observation logging and the interactive feedback from the participant's international friends could be included. Finally, if the period of

observation on the participant's identity shift and language learning attitude and strategies is longer, the readers may see more and deeper follow-up effect of the participation in a natural international learning context. Future studies are suggested to take the limitations into consideration.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Further research is needed to continue the investigation on what the experience of international trips and SA may bring to language learners and what changes it may happen to the learner after the trip. First, teen learners can be studied to see if similar identity shifts as well as attitudes towards learning English and cultural exchange will happen. Second, if participants from different countries and family backgrounds are immersed into an international context, what identity shifts and interaction will happen? Finally, what English teachers with rich cultural understanding and interactive teaching methods can bring special experiences and identity concepts to language learners.

### **Conclusion**

The experiences of international travel and study abroad have been an alternative choice for language learners to immerse themselves into a natural English speaking environment. They can experience the real interaction with the local people in the world and do cultural exchanges besides gaining language learning improvement. However, language learners will encounter diverse difficulties, challenges, struggles and culture shocks in an international context. They may have new realizations and learning from the challenges. Through reading the participant's experiences, we can get the insider's view and possible shifts of the international trip.

By investigating the major themes of the experiences, this study has provided useful discussions to help language teachers or trip organizers plan similar study trips.





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## Appendixes

### Appendix A: Questions for the Pre- visit Interview

1. Please describe your past experiences of learning English, from the moment you knew there was English in this world.
2. What significant events make you like/dislike English?
3. Besides English classes, what opportunities have you had in learning English with other people such as international friends?
4. How would you describe yourself as an English learner?
5. Besides English classes, what opportunities have you had in using English with other people such as international friends?
6. Please describe your difficulties using English. How do you overcome these difficulties?
7. In retrospect, what role and significance has English played in your life?
8. Why do you want to plan this trip? Why do you choose to visit those countries and take those courses with ABC?
9. What are the important objectives that you want to achieve during the travel and study abroad?
10. What do you think about Irish or European people? Why do you have that impression?
11. What do you think about Irish or European cultures? Why do you have that impression?
12. What aspects of the international travel and 5-week study abroad are you most excited about?
13. What worries or fears for this travel and study abroad do you have?

## **Appendix B: Questions for During-the-trip Interviews**

### **Everyday Questions**

1. Please describe the experiences that impressed you most today. (Focus: experiences)
2. Please describe the most impressive experience you had in interacting with other people today, for example the members of your host family and your classmates. (Focus: Interaction)
3. How do those experiences make you think about your English development or cultural understanding? (Focus: Self-evaluation)

### **Weekly Questions**

4. How do you evaluate your experience this week?

### **Questions at the point when the participant moves across countries**

5. How do you evaluate your experience in the last country?

### **Appendix C: Questions for After-the-trip (on the way back) Interview**

1. What activities or classes do you enjoy during the study trip? How can these activities or classes enhance your English proficiency?
2. How do you feel about the classes you attend in Ireland? What are the differences between classes in Ireland and those in Taiwan?
3. What are the difficulties that you face during your study in Ireland and trip in Europe?
4. What are the difficulties that you face during your stay with your Couchsurfing hosts?
5. How do you interact with the members of your hosts from the Couchsurfing website and your classmates?
6. What will you describe yourself as an English learner or user now? Why?
7. During the trip, what part of the culture differences impressed you most?
8. After the trip, how do you find Europeans different from the images you have before?
9. How do you see the cultural differences between the countries you have visited and Taiwan?
10. After the trip, what are the changes of your impressions toward Europeans?
11. How will you describe your study-abroad programs and the trip around the world as a whole?
12. After the trip, what are the new English learning methods or strategies that you adopt?
13. How does the study trip affect your attitude toward English learning?
14. What difficulties do you find in English learning?
15. Generally speaking, how do you evaluate your 5-week study trip in Ireland?
16. During the short-term study trip and travel in many European countries, what events impressed you most? And why?

## Appendix D: Curriculum Description of General English Language Courses in ABC University

(provided by ABC Language School)

### Introduction

The General English Development Courses are designed to help students acquire a comprehensive range of language skills and strategies that will equip them to deal with a wide variety of unpredictable, authentic situations through the medium of English. The programmes give the participants the opportunity to practise newly acquired language in a supportive, controlled environment and furnish them with autonomous learning strategies and communication techniques. Students improve their ability to use language fluently, accurately, spontaneously and appropriately in a spectrum of social, functional, domestic and international scenarios. The activities and methods used ensure that learning is motivating, engaging and challenging throughout. Daily homework tasks and regular tests supplement the class input.

### Vocabulary

Throughout the course a systematic programme of vocabulary input, retrieval, recycling and testing is maintained in order to maximise the expansion of vocabulary resource. Features of vocabulary that are targeted include:

Grammar - Key Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verb tenses: past, present and future</li> <li>• Auxiliary and modal verbs</li> <li>• Transitive and intransitive verbs</li> <li>• Gerunds and infinitives</li> <li>• Word order</li> <li>• Definite and indefinite articles</li> <li>• Reported and direct speech</li> <li>• Passive and active forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepositions of place, time, movement</li> <li>• Countable and uncountable structures</li> <li>• Conditional structures</li> <li>• Comparative and superlative structures</li> <li>• Phrasal verbs</li> </ul>

### Grammar

The syllabus ensures the steady expansion of a usable grammar resource and provides participants with the necessary practice opportunities to enable them to use grammar accurately and spontaneously. Emphasis is given to form, meaning and function so that learners develop the ability to choose the appropriate grammar for different

contexts rather than just the ability to manipulate the grammar in mechanical exercises. Examples of grammar areas that may be explored include:

Grammar - Key Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verb tenses: past, present and future</li> <li>• Auxiliary and modal verbs</li> <li>• Transitive and intransitive verbs</li> <li>• Gerunds and infinitives</li> <li>• Word order</li> <li>• Definite and indefinite articles</li> <li>• Reported and direct speech</li> <li>• Passive and active forms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepositions of place, time, movement</li> <li>• Countable and uncountable structures</li> <li>• Conditional structures</li> <li>• Comparative and superlative structures</li> <li>• Phrasal verbs</li> </ul>

### Speaking

Aside from developing their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar, students need to master certain speaking strategies if they are to manage dialogues and conversations successfully and make their communication meaningful. Some typical language functions and speaking skills that are covered in our courses are outlined below:

Speaking - Key Skills	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiating and responding appropriately</li> <li>• Expressing sympathy and concern</li> <li>• Checking and correcting</li> <li>• Approving and disapproving</li> <li>• Signalling devices (showing interest, surprise, hesitancy, attention)</li> <li>• Repairing a conversation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving advice, making suggestions, offering alternatives &amp; preferences</li> <li>• Agreeing and disagreeing</li> <li>• Interrupting</li> <li>• Reiterating and resuming a topic</li> <li>• Rephrasing and reformulating</li> <li>• Inviting, accepting and declining</li> <li>• Maintaining a conversation - follow on questions</li> </ul>

### Pronunciation

Participants are tutored in producing more natural-sounding English through a focus on the phonetic sounds of the language and the common prosodic features (supra-segmental pronunciation work).



Pronunciation - Key Skills	
Difficult vowel and consonant combinations	Weak / strong forms Accents
Expressing emotions and attitudes through intonation	Rhythm and pitch Rapid speech
Syllable and sentence stress	Linking and connected speech
Contrastive stress	Phonetic script and dictionary use

## Listening

Listening skills are developed alongside speaking skills and participants are immersed to listening activities using both specifically prepared teaching material and authentic recordings.

Listening - Key Skills	
Listening for gist - understanding the main idea	Listening and note-taking Listening and reacting appropriately
Listening for specific information - replicating precise details	Preparing for listening and predictive listening
Understanding different accents	Applying world knowledge
Understanding weak and strong syllables in extended utterances	Listening and rechecking / clarifying Listening to multiple speakers

## Reading

Our programmes support students to develop their reading abilities by focussing attention the various strategies employed by successful readers. Once again, teaching material comes from a wide variety of published and authentic texts.

Reading - Key Skills	
Speed reading	Identifying the attitude of the writer
Reading for global message / skimming	Reading for pleasure
Reading for detail / scanning	Using knowledge of coherence and cohesion to predict text content and
Reading “between the lines”	discern message development
Guessing meaning from context	

## Writing

Participants will gain an understanding of the fundamental differences between written and oral communication. They will learn to apply the rules governing written expression through the production of a selection of common text types.

Writing - Key Skills	
Punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Coherence and cohesion (discourse markers, conjunctions, sequencing words)
Writing genres	Converting spoken communication into written format
Protocol and layout	Being concise and summarising
Stylistic devices	Expanding a text
Avoiding repetition	
Word order	
Constructing paragraphs: topic sentences, developing of ideas	



[illegible]