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一位國中生的第一次出國遊學經驗：

個案研究語言學習者之個人概念改變與挑戰

Taking the Very First Overseas Study Trip: A Case Study on a
Junior High EFL Learner's Identity Change and Challenges



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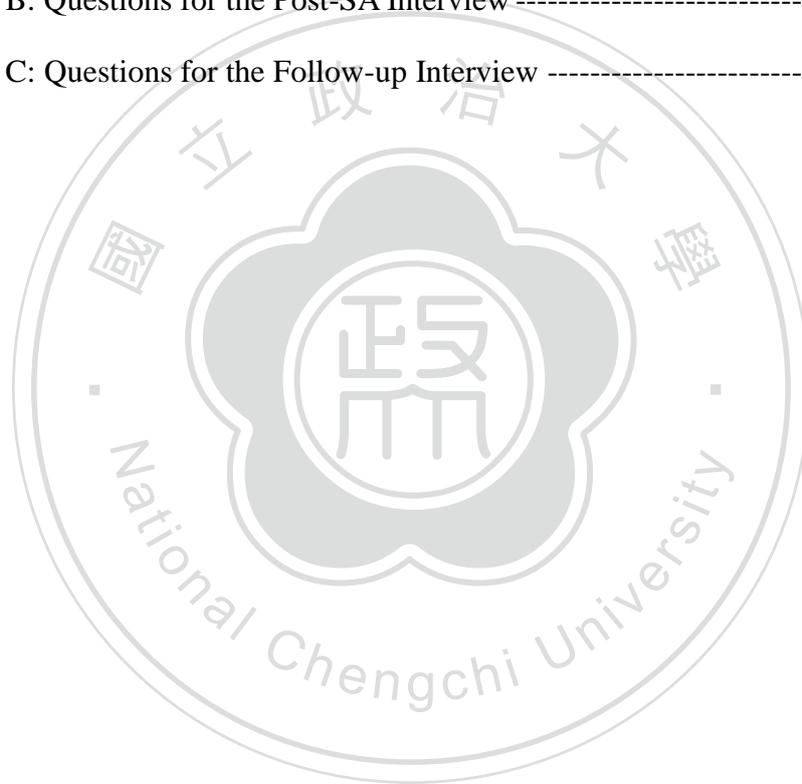
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國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士在職專班

碩士論文題要

論文名稱: 一位國中生的第一次出國遊學經驗: 個案研究語言學習者之個人概念改變與挑戰

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論文提要內容:

出國讀書一向被視為外語學習者培養外語能力的好方法。本研究旨在透過記錄一位名為 Jenny 的國中生至美國的短期遊學經驗，以探究短期遊學對外語學習者的學習歷程及個人概念改變的影響。

本研究方法採用質性研究，研究工具為日記、文件、及半結構式訪談，Jenny 的英語學習經驗被分成三大部分：遊學前經驗、遊學中經驗、及遊學結束三個月後的經驗。透過分析這些資料，本研究討論了以下幾點：Jenny 在外國環境遇到的困難與挑戰、她不斷改變的想像社群及個人概念、及短期遊學對 Jenny 對英語學習及個人身為英語學習者的看法與影響。

研究結果顯示 Jenny 遇到的困難包括(1)和寄宿家庭成員建立關係。(2)在學校情境遇到衝突。(3)和以英語為母語的本地人相處過程中的困難。這過程中，Jenny 的個人概念及想像社群也一直受到挑戰與修正，引發她對自己的個人概念及自己身為語言學習者更深層的了解。除此之外，短期遊學後，Jenny 對自己身為台灣人有了新的觀點，對自己國家的信念也加強了。

最後，依據本研究結果，對於出國學習計畫設計者、教育學者、及英語教師進一步提供相關建議，以期能使出國遊學者的旅程更加豐富且有幫助。

Abstract

Study abroad (SA) has been regarded as a great way to help learners develop foreign language proficiency. The major purpose of this study is to explore how short-term SA experience can affect the learning trajectory and the identity (re)construction of a Taiwanese junior high school student called Jenny through investigating her short-term study trip to the U.S.

A qualitative method was adopted in this case study. Data were collected through diaries, documentation, and three semi-structured interviews. Jenny's English learning experiences were explored longitudinally by categorizing them into three main phases: the pre-SA experience, the during-SA experience, and the three-month-later post-SA experience. By analyzing the data collected, the difficulties and challenges that Jenny encountered in the foreign context, her changing imagined communities and identity, and the impact this short-term SA experience had on her perspectives on English learning and herself as an English learner were discussed.

It was found that Jenny encountered some difficulties during the trip and she struggled to (1) build up relations with members of her host family, (2) resolve the conflicts in school context, and (3) deal with the difficulties when interacting with target language speakers. Moreover, just as Norton's(2011) definition of identity provided, Jenny's identity and her identification with her imagined American community had been constantly challenged and revised during the trip, leading to the deeper realization of her identity and herself as a language learner. Other than that, after the trip Jenny's commitment toward her native country was strengthened because she cultivated a new perspective toward her identity as a Taiwanese and redefined her relationship with her vernacular world.

Finally, pedagogical implications and suggestions derived from the discussions were proposed for SA program designers, language educators, and English teachers to make the SA trips more fruitful and beneficial for language learners.



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background and Motivation

There has been an increasing interest in study abroad (SA) because students, parents, and policy makers believe that SA is an ideal way for language learners to be immersed in the target language and culture and therefore can help develop foreign language proficiency (Brecht, Davidson & Ginsberg, 1993). More and more language learners now choose to take a study-abroad program, either for an academic-year long or for a short-term period. For example, the amount of the U.S. students taking part in SA has risen to more than double over the past decade (Institute of International Education, 2010). In recent years, the number of language learners in Taiwan participating in study tours has also grown rapidly (Jang, 2006). We may, therefore, reasonably conclude that SA is prevalent among second or foreign language learners and is gradually regarded as essential for second language acquisition (SLA).

Much research has been done to investigate what SA can bring to language learners. Though an agreement has not been reached, some studies have shown that SA may bring language learners the advantages of linguistic gains (Matsumura, 2001; Yager, 1998) and cultural/crosscultural learning (Allen & Herron 2003; Bacon 2002; Siegal 1995). Among the studies into SA learners' linguistic outcomes, different focuses were addressed such as oral skills (Freed 1995; Lafford 1995; Segalowitz & Freed 2004), listening comprehension skills (Cubillos, Chieffo & Fan, 2008), or some specific linguistic or structural gains like phonological memory abilities (Lord, 2006). As for culture-related learning, research found some cultural and pragmatic development after the SA experience (Bacon 2002; Siegal 1995). These linguistic and cultural benefits brought by

SA suggest the merit of SA.

In addition to the studies focusing on the outcomes of SA by employing quantitative methods, there is also a growing body of research employing such qualitative methods (Allen, 2010; Miller & Ginsberg, 1995; Polanyi, 1995; Siegal, 1995) as retrospective diaries, interviews, field notes, or ethnographies to gain an in-depth understanding of the process of SA. Among those studies, language learners' identities and imagined communities were recurrent themes and were regarded as two of the key focuses in the SA research (Kinginger, 2004; Norton, 2000, 2001).

The concepts of identity and imagined community with its sociocultural nature are intricate and especially crucial in the SA context. Norton defined identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (Norton, 2000, p.5). In this view, a language learner's identity is changing due to his constant negotiation and renegotiation over a sense of self in relation to the larger social world as well as the reorganization of that relationship in multiple dimensions of their lives. As for imagined community, it refers to "groups of people, not immediately tangible and accessible, with whom we connect through the power of imagination" (Kanno & Norton, 2003, p.241). It is through language learners' imagined communities that they can associate themselves with not just the current communities but the communities they hope to belong to in the future. Such affiliations through the power of imagination will create imagined identities, orienting language learners' actions and therefore affecting their learning trajectories. By studying language learners' identities and imagined communities, the process of SA and how individual learner is integrated into the larger social context can be understood.

Though much research has been done on SA, most of them addressed the SA programs with a longer term, that is, the year-long or semester-long SA programs.

Though it is a common belief that the longer time of immersion in the target language context leads to more language acquisition, sometimes the long-term stay in SA context is impossible due to some economic considerations. Then, to examine the effects that a short-term SA trip, lasting less than two weeks, have is important. To reach a deeper understanding of learners' experiences within such a short-term time, employing the qualitative methods to investigate the processes that learners experience is wanted. The prior qualitative studies (e.g., Kline, 1993; Pellegrino, 1998; Polanyi, 1995; Siegal, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998) all noted the diversity, complexity, and exquisiteness of SA and called for more in-depth qualitative investigation. Freed (1995) also emphasized the importance of individual variation in linguistic description if it is to be applied to practical language problems. However, in Taiwan, an EFL context, there is little research documenting what Taiwanese language learners encountered in the foreign context during SA, what difficulties or challenges they had to face, how their imagined communities and identities change, and what support system the government or language educators needed to provide. Hence, more research addressing this issue is needed.

Purpose and Research Questions of the Study

The purpose of the present study is to explore how short-term SA experience can affect the learning trajectory and the identity (re)construction of a Taiwanese junior high school student called Jenny through investigating her short-term study trip to the U.S. By analyzing the data collected from the diaries kept by Jenny and interviews between the researcher and the participant, the difficulties or challenges the language learner encounters in the foreign context, her changing imagined communities and identity, and how the short-term SA experience affect her perspectives on English leaning and herself as an English learner are documented, analyzed, and discussed. This study does not intend

to provide a generalizable account or to predict experiences but to document and depict the complexities of this particular Taiwanese EFL learner's experiences as a whole. The detailed documents and analysis of the participant's complex learning process in the foreign context in this study are expected to provide some insights for pedagogical use.

The research questions are stated as follows:

How do Jenny's experiences before, during, and after her first short-term study trip to the U.S. reveal potential challenges and identity change?

- a. Before Jenny's trip to the states, what kind of language learning experience (i.e., historical account of significant others and critical events) did she have? What kind of language learner did she consider herself?
- b. During her trip to the states, what challenges, critical events, and significant others did she encounter?
- c. Three months after Jenny's trip, how did she perceive herself as a language learner and how did she think about the trip, its relationship to her current English learning activities and the task of English learning?

Significance of the Study

Unlike most previous SA studies that mainly addressed the outcomes of SA by employing quantitative methods, this study adopts a process-oriented approach, exploring the issue of SA from a qualitative case study perspective that intends to provide in-depth and holistic information of the process that a language learner experienced in SA context. This should lead to a fuller understanding of the SA experience and help identify the potential challenges that language learners may encounter when studying in a foreign context. In addition, by focusing on language learners' identity as well as imagined community (re)construction, this study can potentially contribute to our knowledge of the

two complex constructs, especially how to apply them in a SA context. Finally, now that short-term study trip is often a choice for linguistic improvement or cultural learning among EFL or ESL learners, especially in Taiwan, investigating the process of the SA experience can help identify what can be brought to language learners. The results of the study therefore can provide some insightful suggestions for what support system the government and language educators should provide for SA language learners during the process of second language acquisition (SLA).



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To provide a preliminary framework for understanding the SA experience in the present case, related ideas and theories in the literature are reviewed. This chapter is divided into two main sections: First, a brief review of the benefits of SA and second, the discussion of two concepts: identity and imagined community. In the SA section, a further division of product-oriented approach and process-oriented approach to address learners' SA experiences are presented separately, followed by SA studies in Taiwan and critical issues that SA participants should face. As for the second section, discussion moves from the connection between language and identity, the definition of identity, to the notions of imagined community and investment, and finally the interaction between identity, imagined community, their other extensional notions and language learning in SA context.

Benefits of SA

Product-oriented Research on Linguistic and Cultural Outcomes in Study Abroad

Contexts

Much research has provided the benefits of study abroad, mainly focusing on the linguistic gains and cultural/cross-cultural learning. Many researchers have discussed the linguistic gains which SA brought by doing experiments in different contexts with different focuses. Some of them focused on the overall improvement in listening (Cubillos et al., 2008) or oral proficiency (Freed 1995, Lafford 1995, Segalowitz & Freed 2004), while others focused on the specific linguistic or structural gains. For example,

Lord's (2006) and Simões' (1996) studies showed that phonetic or phonological development can be improved through SA. Vocabulary can also be enriched after SA (Dewey, 2004, 2007). There are also other studies discussing what variables such as gender, pre-program motivation, intercultural sensitivity, or relationship with the host family are related to language learners' linguistic gains (Brecht et al., 1993; Martinsen 2008).

Researchers have also looked at improvements in areas related to culture such as cultural sensitivity (Bacon, 2002; Martinsen, 2011; Wilkinson, 1998), cross-cultural skills (Laubscher, 1994) or cultural knowledge (Carlson, Burn, Useem, & Yachimowicz, 1990). Martinsen (2011) found a small but significant increase in participants' cultural sensitivity and stated that the most important key factor of this improvement is their interaction with native speakers. Allen, Dristas and Mills (2006) showed that SA participants faced some, though not as much as they had imagined, sociocultural challenges when studying abroad. Owing to those challenges, the SA participants re-evaluated their cultural identities and moved toward a more hybrid understanding of identity. Moreover, certain cross-cultural skills (Laubscher, 1994) and cultural knowledge (Carlson et al., 1990) are claimed to be gained after SA. These studies above have provided valuable insight into the merits of taking a SA program.

Most of the studies addressing the linguistic or cultural gains have employed quantitative methods. Such proficiency instruments as Oral Proficiency Interview (Brecht et al., 1993; Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Liu, 2011; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (Berg, Connor-Linton & Paige, 2009) or other self-made tests (Allen & Horron, 2003; Lord, 2006; Martinsen, 2008) were used to measure learners' linguistic outcomes. To understand learners' gains of cultural or crosscultural knowledge, questionnaires and surveys like *Inventory of Cross-Cultural Sensitivity* (Martinsen, 2011) and the *Intercultural Development Inventory* (Berg, et. al.,

2009) were employed. All these studies intended to prove the increases in language or cultural skills after SA with positive evidence.

Process-oriented Research on the Process of Learning in Study Abroad Context

Though a great deal of quantitative research has claimed the effectiveness of SA in terms of linguistic gains and cultural learning, there were some researchers challenging the automatic creation of cultural or sociocultural gains (Wilkinson, 1998; Yager, 1998). They criticized the product-oriented approach for neglecting the process and questioned if focusing on the measurable advances will be sufficient for understanding SA experiences and the whole processes of learners' language-learning journey. Wilkinson (1998) pointed out that analyzing the overall outcomes exclusively may overlook the intense experience each individual has and the ramifications that is most influential and long-lasting for individual learning. Polanyi (1995), after analyzing the personal stories of SA participants, also made the similar conclusion that using those standardized tests to measure learners' language ability produced devastating effects because it neglected the actual stories happened during the process. Furthermore, the study abroad experience is highly varied across individuals and contexts (Kinging & Farrell, 2004; Kinginger, 2008; Pellegrino, 2005). Therefore, employing quantitative methods may not be sufficient for a fuller understanding of language learners' SA experiences.

Because of the above-mentioned concerns, a body of research has shifted its focus from the overall outcomes to a closer examination of the process of SA (Allen, 2010; Miller & Ginsberg, 1995; Polanyi, 1995; Siegal, 1995). In these studies, autobiographies, field diaries and retrospection interviews were employed to gain a deeper understanding of the actual process of SA. These techniques for data collection ask learners to report the events that happened and their reactions to the events during the process of SA. Some studies analyzed students' perceptions of the target language and language learning in SA

contexts in order to gain a deep understanding of what SA brings to students (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Miller & Ginsberg, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998). Through the detailed analysis of qualitative data researchers can gain more than a surface-level understanding of the phenomenon and therefore a fuller understanding of the personal experiences in SA context is possible (Pellegrino, 1997).

In addition to their process-oriented essence, qualitative studies tended to treat participants as diverse people, not the “one” standard learner that might be the representation of all the student population (Polanyi, 1995). Polanyi (1995) calls upon our attention to consider who the “one” is:

The impersonal “one” which “needs to know” or “learns a language” is the issue. Who “one” is is a factor of one’s native talent for language learning, one’s educational background and motivation but it is also a product of one’s gender, one’s class, one’s race, one’s sexual orientation, one’s health and degree of abledness. Ultimately, every language learner is alone with a unique experiences, an experience tailored to, by and for that individual. (p.287)

It is clear that researchers orienting from this approach tried to understand language learners' learning through incorporating personal histories and organizing lived experiences related to language learning.

The Study Abroad Studies in Taiwan

In Taiwan, the government, educators, and parents are always concerning about how to improve students’ English proficiency. Different forms of SA such as study tours or short-term visits are introduced and adopted as supplementary of formal English learning. However, studies investigating the outcomes of participating in SA programs are

still limited. Jang (2004) studied 140 students participating in SA trips and found that students' language proficiency and English learning attitudes were enhanced after SA. Lin (2002) and Tzeng (2006) investigated 33 and 12 students taking part in study-tour programs separately and drew similar conclusions that study tours could increase students' cultural capital and cultivate their multiple intelligences. Chen's (2012) study also reported that study tours provide more opportunities to use the target language, chances for deeper cultural understanding, and an enhancement of learner motivation. However, despite the previously addressed outcomes and effects that SA trips brought to Taiwanese learners, the real processes that happened to them in the foreign contexts are rarely discussed. Also, what kinds of challenges or difficulties that Taiwanese SA participants face in the SA context are limitedly known.

Critical Issues that Study Abroad Participants should Face

One important component of a SA trip is home-stays where SA participants stay. It is believed that home-stay provides more opportunities for target language interaction (Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). Indeed, many students hold a positive attitude toward their home-stay experiences (Ingram, 2005; Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2006) and some would like to recommend it to others (Schmidt-Rinehart & Knight, 2004). However, previous studies also provided the evidence that just putting learners in the home-stay context does not necessarily create opportunities for cultural awareness or linguistic gains (Rivers, 1998; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998). That is, for some reasons, SA learners may not actively practice language with the host-family members. Moreover, some complaints about the uncomfortable treatment of the home-stays and learners' uncomfortable feelings in home-stay were recorded in Wilkinson's (1998) study. Hence, home-stay environment does play a significant role in

determining the success of a SA experience.

Identity and Imagined Community in Study Abroad Context

The Language-identity Connection

The basic connection between language learning and identity is obvious because language learning is so complex a process that many factors can affect and be affected by the process. Djité (2006) argued that “language and identity are ultimately inseparable” (p.3). Diamond (2010) also noted that “identity plays a significant role in language acquisition, and that language acquisition likewise plays a significant role in re-forming an individual’s identity” (p.3). Due to the tight connection between identity and language learning, it is dangerous to omit the impact of identity when scrutinizing the language learning process. Therefore, this study adopts the “identity approach” (Norton & McKinney, 2011) to the discussion of SLA in SA context.

Definition of Identity

There are quite a few terms such as “self”, “person”, and “self-concept” that carry somewhat similar meanings to the notion of “identity” here, revealing its complex nature. After long-term discussion, definition, rejection, and redefinition of this concept in SLA from different perspectives, traditions, and theories, its meaning become richer.

To look at the notion of “identity” from a broad view, Owens (2003) regarded self as “a process and organization born of self-reflection” while identity as “a tool (or in some cases perhaps a stratagem) by which individuals or groups categorize themselves and present themselves to the world” (p. 206). From this argument, it is clear that identity has something to do with an individual’s relation to others as well as the social world.

Owen (2003) adds that identity offers “categories people use to specify who they are and to locate themselves relative to other people. In this sense, identity implies both a distinctiveness from others (I am not like them or a “not-me”) and a sameness with others (I am like them or a “me-too”)” (p. 207). Djité (2006) offered a similar perspective on identity by saying that identity is “the everyday word for people’s sense of who they are. It is both about sameness with others and uniqueness of the self”(p.6). For Djité, it is the individual identity that gives us a uniqueness of self. Hence, identity, as way to distinguish ourselves from others, is defined within the larger social context. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) also emphasize the social meaning of “person”, which may be the alternative term for identity.

The current study adopts the poststructural perspective of identity because when discussing identity and SLA, it is a commonly adopted approach (Block, 2007), Norton's identity approach, especially. Poststructuralists viewed language learning as a complex social practice in which meanings are created and relationships are defined, negotiated, and resisted. During the process, the changing relationships of power influence the ways in which we understand ourselves and others (Bakhtin, 1981; Bourdieu, 1977; West, 1992). West (1992) argued that identity has something to do with desire; that is, it is about how human beings construct their desire for recognition, association, and protection over time and in space. Due to the unequal distribution of material resources in society, it is the privileged that have the access to the resources that can articulate their desires. Hence, these various kinds of desires are closely linked with the distribution of material resources in society, and an individual's identity is partly defined by his social and economic relations. Bourdieu (1977) foregrounded the relations of power by focusing on the relationship between identity and symbolic power. He contended that the relationship between interlocutors are often unequally structured because of the symbolic power relations.

Weedon (1987) provided that “Language is the place where actual and possible forms of social organization and their likely social and political consequences are defined and contested. Yet it is also the place where our sense of selves our subjectivity, is constructed” (p.21). In other words, our identity, our sense of selves, are constructed by language. Working within a feminist poststructuralistic tradition, Weedon (1987) conceptualized social identity, what she called “subjectivity”, by integrating language, individual experience and social power to arrive at the definition that subjectivity is “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 32). There are three defining characteristics of subjectivity: (a) the multiple nature of subjectivity; (b) subjectivity as a site of struggle, and (c) subjectivity as changing over time. First, contrary to humanists' depiction of identity as “unitary and fixed,” poststructuralistists view individual as diverse, multiple, dynamic and contradictory. Therefore, subjectivity is multiple in nature. Second, individual takes up different subject positions, each entails different relations of power. Sometimes the positions are in conflict with others, leading to the struggle of subjectivity. And finally Weedon argued that “the political significance of decentering the subject and abandoning the belief in essential subjectivity is that it opens up subjectivity to change” (p.33). Due to this changing characteristic of human subjectivity, educators can exert their influence during the process and therefore educational change is possible. In all, the above discussion all point to the central argument: identities are viewed as diverse, multiple, and changing over time and space.

Among the many researchers that have endeavored to address identity and SLA, Norton, drawing upon Weedon, has done a lot to connect the identity and second language acquisition. In her introduction to the special-topic issue of the *TESOL Quarterly on Language and Identity*, Norton raised five characteristics of identity after reviewing and analyzing five articles by Morgan, Duff and Uchida, Thesen, Schecter and

Bayley, and Leung, Harris, and Rampton in the issue in 1997. Those characteristics are the consistent conceptions of identity shared by the five studies.

1. Identity is complex, contradictory, and multifaceted. The researchers all reject any simplistic notions of identity.
2. Identity is dynamic across time and space.
3. Identity constructs and is constructed by language.
4. Identity construction must be understood with respect to larger social processes, marked by relations of power that can be wither coercive or collaborative.

The importance of the social status and power relations during learners' second language acquisition and participation are also highlighted by Norton (2000). Her contention is parallel to the idea by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) that identity, occurring and operating within specific community of practice, is constructed within the larger social structures. Similarly, Morita (2004) also used the community of practice concept to address the relationship between second language learning and learner identity and concluded that learners experienced negotiation of roles and identities during SLA and such identities and membership shaped and are shaped by their class participation.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) situated learning, serving as the theoretical foundation to Norton's identity approach of SLA, noted the view of learning as a kind of social participation in communities of practice. That is to say, when a learner learns, instead of just acquiring a set of rules, he is constantly changing his participation in communities of practice. That leads us to the argument that learning is situated in local community of practices. Within Lave and Wenger's community of practice framework, Wenger (1991) further proposed that learning is a process of incremental participation in a community of practice, what he call legitimate peripheral participation. During the process of

participation of practices, the old-timers (often the native speakers) help the newcomers (often the language learners) increase their experience and participation of the community practices, guiding them to gradually move from peripheral participation of the community of practice to achieve full-participation. Though the old-timers may have different influence on the newcomers, resulting in different degrees of participation of individual, it is through the participation in the practices an individual learns to become a certain kind of person and therefore his identity is constructed.

The issue of language learner identity surfaces especially in the SA context because language learners often have difficulties developing a comfortable position in that new environment (Siegal, 1995; Wilkinson, 1998). Drawing upon Weedon, Norton defined identity as “how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future” (2000, p.5). In other words, an individual’s identity is constructed from the constantly changing relationship between the individual learner and the larger social world. Due to its changing nature, language learning is situated in a specific sociocultural context within a particular time and in a particular place. Hence, we may conclude that a language learner’s identity is multiple and dynamic because it is constantly reorganized and renegotiated.

Imagined Communities and Imagined Identities

An extension of interest in the concept of identity is language learners' identification with their “imagined communities” that they desire to belong to. The term “imagined communities” was first introduced by Anderson (1991) and then extended to educational settings. Anderson (1991) proposed that what we called nations are indeed imagined communities, “because the members of even the smallest nation will never

know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (p. 6). According to Anderson, through imagination one creates a common identity and consciousness that bond him with his nation and the people under the name of nation regardless time and space. Due to this sense of bonding, a community is formed and national identity is created.

Later, Wenger (1998) expanded the notion of imagined community to educational settings and developed fuller theories of imagination and learning. He hypothesized that people identify through three modes of belongings: engagement, imagination, and alignment. “Engagement” refers to the active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning. Such kind of belonging is a local participation “bounded” within a specific time and space. As for the second mode “imagination”, people use it to create images of the world and see connections through time and space by extrapolating from their own experience. However, imagination does not necessarily lead to a coordination of action; hence, the last mode “alignment” addresses the extent to which we coordinate our energies and activities in order to fit within broader structures and contribute to broader enterprises. As Wenger notes,

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

According to Wenger, imagination is a process of including other meanings, other possibilities, and other perspectives in our identities and new ways of understanding one’s relation to the world. Therefore, imagination serves not only educational but also identity functions. Later, Norton (2000) conducted a research of immigrant women learning English in Canada and proposed that when a learner starts learning a language, he may invest in his imagined communities that transcend the four walls of the classroom.

Drawing on Wenger's work, Norton proposed the construct 'imagined community' as the groups of people, intangible or not immediately accessible, with whom an individual connect and affiliate through the power of imagination (Norton, 2001; Kanno & Norton, 2003; Norton & McKinney, 2011). That is, every individual learner has certain imagined affiliations with certain groups of people and it is through the affiliations with the communities one's imagined identity is created and revealed. Therefore, imagined communities can help us understand not only the process of language learning, especially in SA context, but also the construction of learners' identities.

Investments and Identities

Another concept that is important to the understanding of second language learner identity is "investment". Investment, developed by Norton, signals a "socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (Norton & McKinney, 2011, p.75). Distinct from motivation, which is a quantification of a learner's commitment to learning the target language, investment depicts the changing relationship between the learner and the target language. It is supposed that when a learner invests in language learning, in her mind she imagines a community that she wants to participate in and during the process she constantly constructs or reconstructs her identity, her imagined community and her relations to the social world. Therefore, investment can be best understood within the context of imagined community and identity.

Drawing on Bourdieu (1977), Norton noted that when a learner invests in second language learning, he does so because he knows that he will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, to increase the value of 'cultural capital.' Cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) is the knowledge and modes of thought that characterize

different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms, with differential exchange values. In addition to the cultural capital, also, he hopes to get rewarding returns that can give him access to the privileges of target language speakers and be associated with that imagined community no matter it is the present community or the community in the future. Therefore, an investment in the target language is also an investment in learner's own identity. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) also stated that the degree or extent of investment can be key of becoming a proficient or fluent language learner, indicating its importance in language learning. McKay and Wong (1996), linking investment and identity to coping strategy, argued that "Whereas individual students favor specific coping strategies, these strategies also appear related to the overall picture of a learner's identities and of the strength and type of his/her investment in learning the target language" (p. 604). Thus, a conclusion may be drawn that the sense of identity (re)construction and the imagined future community membership drive learners to invest in language learning.

Language Learners' Identities, Imagined Communities, and Investments in Study Abroad

Context

When addressing the relationship between participation of community of practice and identity, Wenger (1998) used the notions of "participation" and "nonparticipation". Learners' identities are defined through not only their participation but their non-participation of community of practices as well. As Wenger (1998) contends,

We not only produce our identities through the practices we engage in, but we also define ourselves through practices we do not engage in. Our identities are constituted not only by what we are but also by what we are

not. To the extent that we can come in contact with other ways of being, what we are not can even become a larger part of how we define ourselves (p. 164).

That is to say, learners' identities are produced through the choices of their participation and non-participation in the socially situated processes.

Some learners' non-participation in class during their SA periods can be caused by the mismatch between language learners' imagined communities and the teachers or schools' objectives, further resulting in their lack of investment in language learning or class. In Norton's (2000, 2001) work, two highly-motivated adult immigrants, Katarina and Felicia, both escaped from their language courses, revealing their lack of investment in the language practices because of the clash between their imagined communities and their teachers' visions of their identities. Katarina had been a teacher in Poland for quite a few years before she went to Canada and she took pride in her highly respectable professional. Therefore, her imagined community was a community of professionals. She denied her language class participation due to her L2 teacher's comment that her English was not good enough to take the computer class, which was intellectually challenging and could give her access to her imagined community. That the language teacher merely regarded Katarina as a newcomer, an immigrant, and a language learner rather than a member of the professional community upset Katarina. To guard the integrality of her identity as a professional in her imagined community, she chose to withdraw from the class.

Similar story also happened to Felicia (Norton, 2000, 2001). Felicia escaped from her language classroom because after the activity of introducing their countries, the teacher omitted her native country Peru in her summary of today's class. Her reaction to this neglect was very fierce because she identified herself as a wealthy Peruvian, instead of an immigrant. Her teacher's failure to acknowledge her identity and imagined

community led to her nonparticipation in that course. Hence, though Katarina and Felicia were both highly-motivated language learners because of their immigration to Canada, the mismatch between Katarina's and Felicia's imagined communities and their teachers' visions of their identities led to their lack of investment in language learning and therefore their "nonparticipation" in class. Accordingly, a conclusion may be made that an individual's relation to and experience in the classroom community of practice and his imagined community may inhibit his participation. Such participation and non-participation of a class can transcend the factors in the classroom to be affected by a learner's imagined community as well as his imagined connections with it. That leads us to the conclusion: language learners' affiliations with their imagined communities can affect learners' dispositions toward language learning, their investment in it, and therefore their learning trajectories.

On the other hand, language learners' investment or persistence in language learning can be inspired by their imagined communities. In Kanno's (2000, 2003) work, a Japanese teenager named Rui tried to preserve his mother tongue regardless his long-term stay in English-speaking countries because he believed that keeping Japanese provides him the access to his imagined Japan that he has long identified himself with. Likewise, in Kinginger's (2004) case study, her participant, Alice, had cultivated a romantic image of the imagined communities of French language users. Due to her affiliations and identification with the French community, she had great investment in French learning, overcoming significant personal, social, and material obstacles during her learning process and persisted in her learning of French.

Imagined communities are also multiple in nature, leading to language learner's hybrid identities. Norton and Kamal (2003) investigated a group of Pakistan students involved in a global community education project to explore what students hoped for the future based on their educational experiences. The result showed that they hoped to

master English to take part in the activities in the global community and at the same time their vernacular languages could coexist with the global language. That is, they identified with both the English-dominated global community and their vernacular communities. Such multiple imagined communities produced hybrid identities.

Identities, Imagined Communities and Power

Identities as well as imagined communities are also related to ideologies and power. Many poststructuralists have suggested the implication of power relations in the nature of language learning. Norton and McKinney (2001) especially calls upon our attention to the power relations in their identity approach. Consequently, identity, rather than a compilation of variables, is sets of relationship that are socially and historically constructed within particular relations of power and such relations have a direct influence on language learning. Students in Norton and Kamal's (2003) study expected themselves to be skillful in English, the global language which entails more power, so as to gain more access to opportunities for a better future. Immigrant parents in Canada, viewing multilingualism as capital and investment in language education as assurance of a relatively privileged position, imagined communities, the Canadian English-French bilingual community, they hoped their children grew up to participate in and made educational decisions for them (Dagenais, 2003). Kanno's (2003) research of the bilingual schools in Japan demonstrated how different schools construct different imagined communities for their students and how the least privileged bilingual students are socialized into the least privileged imagined communities, thus a kind of social reproduction. Martina and Eva, being regarded as 'immigrants', were placed in the subject position, leading to their silence when interacting with their colleges in workplace (Norton, 2000). The embedded power in the social relations greatly influences their

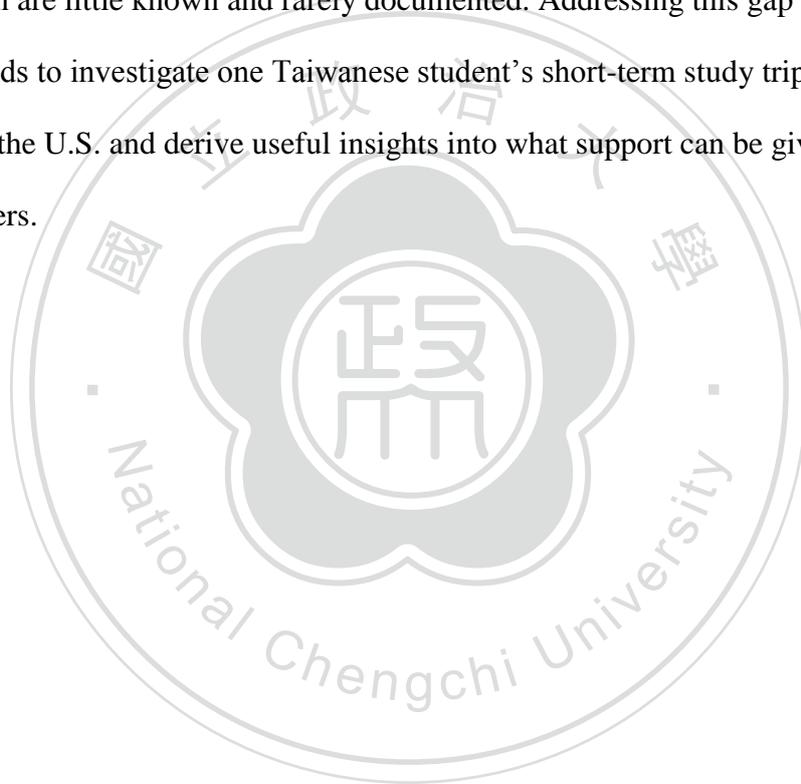
investment and their interaction with others. Similarly, Kinginger (2004) and Polanyi (1995) found that female SA participants were placed in an unprivileged position due to their limited access to social networks that would most enhance their foreign language learning and therefore make their learning more challenging. To sum up, learning a language in a foreign context involves a process of identity (re)construction and imagined community affiliation and during the process certain kind of social power and ideology had a great influence on the construction of learner identity.

The Need for Further Studies in Taiwanese Language Learners' Study Abroad

Experiences

English learning has become a public frenzy in Taiwan. It is believed that mastery of English is the shortcut to not only becoming a member of the global community but also achieving personal future success. With this belief in mind, both parents and the government make a great deal of efforts to promote English education. The government has set English learning as the core curriculum and top priority in the overall educational system. One obvious example is that the English education has been extended from seventh grade to third grade in elementary school since 2005. Many local governments even begin the English classes as early as the first year of elementary school. The number of English classes also rose, moving from one class per week to two classes per week in elementary school. The government's hard-work of promoting English education is clearly seen. On the other hand, parents have tried every means to provide the best possible resources for their children's English learning. Numerous of language schools, English learning centers, and cram schools are found on the streets to address parents' "English anxiety". Besides, various kinds of English learning programs or activities are

there for parents to choose and short-term SA tours are among them. By sending children to a target language context, parents believe that their children can have a full interaction with the target language native speakers in the natural settings so that language acquisition can be achieved unconsciously. However, so far little attention in research has been paid to the processes and experiences during Taiwanese language learners' time in the foreign context. What difficulties they encounter, what challenges they have to face, and in what way their experiences in the foreign context cause their identity (re)construction are little known and rarely documented. Addressing this gap in research, this study intends to investigate one Taiwanese student's short-term study trip experiences in the U.S. and derive useful insights into what support can be given to SA language learners.



CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study approach designed within an “exploratory-interpretive” paradigm defined by Nunan (1992) as one “which utilizes a non-experimental method, yields qualitative data, and provides an interpretive analysis of that data” (p.4). The instruments adopted are semi-structured interviews, diaries and documentation. The aims are to probe into the research questions qualitatively with a thick and holistic description of the individual learner’s English learning experiences and perspectives.

Participant and Context

Criteria of Choosing the participant

The present study is designed to investigate how one language learner’s experiences before, during, and after her first short-term SA trip to the U.S., focusing on challenges and identity (re)construction. To reach a deeper understanding of this topic, the participant, Jenny, is selected for the following reasons (pseudonym is used here). First, she was chosen as the school representative of this study-trip program. That is to say, she won herself the chance to do her first trip abroad, which happened to be the focus of this study. Second, she had been placed in an environment that was helpful in and friendly to English learning since little, and hence she had plenty of experiences of English learning before this SA trip. Moreover, she is an active English learner who is eager to not only

learn more and but also learn more effectively. She is willing to reflect on her learning and share her thoughts and developments with the researcher. For the above reasons, Jenny was invited to be the participant of the study.

The participant

This section provides background information about Jenny, the participant. Jenny's parents work as engineers in HsinChu Science Park, which are often regarded as high-pay positions. This family background gives her a so-called "head start" of foreign language education from as early as kindergarten. At the time of data collection, Jenny was a second-year student at the junior high school where the researcher worked as a teacher. I met Jenny in the screening interview for the Short-Term Exchange Visit Program, which is a kind of short-term SA program held by the HsinChu Bureau of Education. Her positive attitude and calm expression in the interview clearly revealed her confidence in English speaking and her aspiration for participating in the program.

Jenny was enthusiastic about this short-term visit to the U.S. Her mother informed her of this program in HsinChu City when she was still in the elementary school. After that, in order to win the chance, she started to do some preparation for the screening test including reading many English novels and trying to memorize a large amount of vocabulary. Competing with the other 20 applicants, Jenny got the highest score at the reading and listening sections of the test and her oral skills in the screening interview outperformed other candidates. Her excellent performance impressed all the teachers and finally she was successfully selected as the school representative of this short-term exchange visit program. This trip was her first time abroad, so she really looked forward to it before the trip.

The context

The Short-Term Exchange Visit Program was an extension of the language learning programs sponsored by the HsinChu Bureau of Education. It was designed to broaden students' horizons as well as to enhance their English learning through a 12-day cultural visit in Cupertino, California. In this group, there were 23 high school students (from both junior high and senior high schools in HsinChu) in total, each of whom was selected as the only one school representative for this English learning program. They left for Cupertino, California for the cultural visit in October, 2011. The participants of the program attended high school classes in Cupertino with their host brothers or sisters in the morning to experience the learning environment in the U.S. In the afternoon, they could stay with their host brothers or sisters to take part in some extra-curriculum activities such as sports. Some cultural lessons or visits were also arranged in the afternoon. At night they would spend time with their host families. This program aimed to provide students with extended experience with the American language and culture which many Taiwanese students as EFL learners did not have the opportunities to be exposed to.

Data Collection

To explore how Jenny's experiences before, during, and after her short-term study trip to the U.S. reveal challenges involved in the process and her identity change, three main data collection methods, semi-structured interviews, diaries, and documentation were adopted. Informal conversations with Jenny's mother were also documented. It is hoped that through utilizing these instruments, a picture of participant identity and her learning process can be co-constructed.

Semi-structured Interviews

Since interview is regarded as one of the major sources of case study information (Yin, 2003), three one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of Jenny's experiences. Semi-structured interview is a kind of interview 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). The three interviews (pre-SA, post-SA and follow-up) all lasted for around one hour and were captured by a recorder. The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews with a pre-designed but highly flexible set of questions to probe into the research topic in depth. The interview questions (see Appendixes) were developed and synthesized from the literature. Besides those specified in Appendixes, many more follow-up questions were also asked to have the participant clarify or elaborate on certain details. When something worthy of discussing emerged in the first or second interview, the researcher would make sure to address the issue in the next interview. During the data-collection process, new themes and issues that emerged were also discussed with the participant. The three interviews were designed to capture the dynamic nature of the interaction between learner identity and language learning; therefore, some of the similar questions were repeated to capture if any changes had happened.

The first interview, i.e., the pre-SA interview, was conducted in July, 2010. Questions related to the participant's prior English learning experiences, her images of Cupertino, California, the people, and the culture of the U.S., and her expectations of this upcoming visit were asked. The pre-visit interview questions are included in Appendix A.

The second interview, i.e., the post-SA interview, was conducted immediately (no more than one week) after the participant returned from the U.S. in November, 2011. This

interview invited the participant to elaborate on her experiences and feelings in the foreign context. The researcher discussed with her what she wrote in her diaries and invited her to reflect on her experiences. By conducting the post-SA interview, the researcher attempted to understand what challenges she encountered in the foreign context and how the challenges affected her perceptions of her identity, English learning, and her imagined American community. The data from the post- SA interview were also used to compare and contrast with those from the pre- SA interview and diaries. The questions for the post- SA interview are attached in Appendix B. To achieve a deeper understanding of her experiences and perceptions, the researcher also asked Jenny to bring the photos she took during the trip to tell stories in the post-visit interview. The data gathered from the photo-mediated story-telling sessions were used for data-triangulation.

The third interview, the follow-up interview, was conducted in February, 2012, three months after the participant came back to Taiwan. In this interview, the main issues explored was the changes of her view toward the task of English learning and how she identifies herself as an English learner. Her images of the place, the people, and the culture of America and how those images differ from her previous impression were also the focus of this interview. The questions in the third interview are listed in Appendix C.

Besides interviews with Jenny, informal conversations with Jenny's mother were also arranged to gather information from her parents' perspective for later data-triangulation. This was to ensure trustworthiness of this study.

Diaries

Dairies were kept by Jenny every day during her time in the U.S., providing a fuller understanding of the experience and her perspectives on those events that happened during SA. According to Bailey and Ochsner (1983), a diary study is “an account of a

second language experience as recorded in a first-person journal” (p.189). It is introspective in nature and can be used as the source of information about learners’ beliefs and feelings (Bailey 1980; Polanyi 1995). With introspection or retrospection, Jenny documented the events and her interpretations of the events during her time abroad. As for the language used in the diary (and interviews), due to the participant’s basic-level English proficiency and her shared L1 with the researcher, the choice of Mandarin is justifiable (Pavlenko, 2007), although the participant was given the choice to write either in English or Chinese as long as she could fully express herself. Jenny, as an active learner, eventually chose English to keep her diary because she is eager to improve her English writing. Through the diaries the researcher can understand Jenny's experiences in the U.S. from the insider’s point of view.

Documentation

In addition to her diaries, Jenny’s photos, travel logs and a collection of her works like homework assignments or reports during the 12-day study tour were collected. Photos taken during the trip were used to help Jenny recall every interesting anecdote that happened and to have a glimpse of her interaction with host family members, schoolmates, and other native speakers. Some official documents such as the program objectives, class schedule, and curriculum descriptions were also included and documented for data analysis and triangulation. It is believed that these existing documents could shed lights on the research topic.

Procedures

The data collection for this study lasted for eight months, from July 2011 to February 2012. In July, 2011, three months before the participant’s trip, the first interview

was conducted. This interview aimed for the participant's prior English learning experiences, her images of English native speakers, and her expectations of this upcoming visit. In the end of October 2011, the participant left for her 12-day study visit to the U.S. During the trip abroad, diaries documenting Jenny's experiences, thoughts, and reactions to events were kept in written form. Other documentation like Jenny's photos, her assignments or reports and all the official documents related to this study tour were collected as well. After Jenny returned, the diary and documentation data were collected. Right after (no more than a week) the participant returned from the trip in November, 2011, the second interview was conducted. Her experiences in the U.S., especially the challenges or difficulties she encountered were the focus of this interview. In February 2012, three months after the trip, a follow-up interview was conducted. In this interview, questions concerning changes of her attitude or views toward English learning, her identity, and her impression of American culture were asked. Finally, all the data from the diaries, three interviews, and documentation were gathered for further analysis. The overall picture of the procedures of data collection in this study is visualized in Table 1.

Table 1. An overall picture of the procedures of data collection

Time	Activity	Focus
July, 2011	Pre-SA interview	prior English learning experiences
Oct.-Nov., 2011	Participant diaries	the 12-day visit
Nov., 2011	Post-SA interview	1. collection of the diary and all the related documentation 2. elaborate her experiences and reactions in the foreign context
Feb., 2012	Follow-up interview	changes of her views toward the experiences abroad, the task of English learning and herself as an English learner
Feb.,2012~	Data-analysis Coder checking Member checking	

Data Analysis

The data in the present study was analyzed in the so-called “classic ethnographic style”; in other words, it relied heavily on “the identification and categorization of key themes, perspectives and events, working towards an account that embraces adequate description and interpretation, which may include amongst other things extracts from fieldnotes, narrative vignettes and samples of talk” (Richard, 2003, p. 14-15). The actual data analysis procedure is presented here. First, the three semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed. During the analysis, the researcher first tried to reconstruct the

participant's experiences using her diaries, the interview data, and the documentation collected. Then the researcher categorized her experiences and perceptions based on emerging themes related to the research questions. A colleague with TESOL background was invited to code the raw data with the researcher to ensure trustworthiness of the study. First, the colleague and the researcher coded the data from the interviews and participant diaries separately. Then we compared and triangulated the classifications. For those inconsistent data classification, they discussed until the agreement was reached. For example, when coding the incident of Jenny's accent being regarded as "cute", the two coders had different opinions about whether it carried a positive or negative meaning and how to classify it. After discussion, when all the agreements were reached, all the themes derived from the pre-SA interview, post-SA interview, follow-up interview, diaries and photo story-telling sessions were all examined and triangulated again. Just as what Richards (2003) suggested to obtain data "from different time, space or person perspectives" (p. 251), besides triangulation of methods, triangulation of perspectives (perspectives from Jenny and her mother) was also conducted to add trustworthiness to the study.

Cho and Trent (2006) suggested that "reflexive member checking seeks to illuminate a better representation of the lived experience of the participants being studied" (p.322). During the process of data-analyzing and writing-up of this thesis, the participant was also invited to participate in an ongoing conversation with the researcher. That is, the researcher rephrased or elaborated the participant's statements back to her for confirmation in order to make her points clear. Through this member checking process, the participant contributed directly to the analysis (Kinberger, 2004; Pvlenco, 2007) and ensured the analysis as appropriate and accurate as possible.

Besides, all the data from diaries and interviews were coded based on the three defining characteristics of identity in Norton (2000). Norton's definition of identity has

been adopted to address issues from the poststructural and sociocultural perspectives. The three characteristics of identity are:

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.

While the initial coding mainly followed Norton's characterization, emerging themes that did not fit nicely with the existing categories were also discussed to provide proper interpretations.

The present study intended to provide a picture of the unique experience of the participant in the SA context. It seems specific and non-generalizable on the surface, but it is not because Ellis (2004) contended that it is the readers who determine the generalizability of a narrative since they can decide whether it "speaks to them about their experience or about the lives of others they know. Readers provide theoretical validation by comparing their lives to ours, by thinking about how our lives are similar and different and the reasons why" (p. 194-195). In other words, the small number of participants in a qualitative study can be mitigated by the thick description provided because it is the readers that can determine how much can be applied to their own situation.

To address the research question "How do Jenny's experiences before, during, and after her first short-term study trip to the U.S. reveal potential challenges and identity change?" the researcher first provided a description of the historical account of significant others and critical events before and during her study trip to the U.S. Then, the data from the three interviews and Jenny's diaries were presented to gain an picture of how Jenny identifies herself as an English learner and how she perceives the task of English learning before, during, and after the trip using Norton (2001)'s framework of identity. Finally, interpretations of the potential challenges and identity change were derived from the previous data analysis and the emerging themes. Through those interpretations, the

researcher provided suggestions for what support system language educators and the government could provide to SA language learners and while they were in the foreign context. Suggestions for further studies are also provided in Chapter 6.



CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents Jenny's experiences and challenges in the SA context and her identity change after the trip to the U.S. It is divided into three main sections: pre-SA experience, during-SA experience, and afterwards post-SA experience three month later to address the following three sub-questions:

- a. Before Jenny's trip to the states, what kind of language learning experience (i.e., historical account of significant others) did she have? What kind of language learner did she consider herself?
- b. During her trip to the states, what challenges, critical events, and significant others does she encounter?
- c. Three months after Jenny's trip, how does she perceive herself as a language learner and how does she think about the trip, its relationship to her current English learning activities and the task of English learning?

For each section, how Jenny learns English, how she looks upon herself as a language learner, how the significant others influence her, and other important information related to the research topic are presented.

Before the Trip

- a. Before Jenny's trip to the states, what kind of language learning experience (i.e., historical account of significant others and critical periods) did she have? What kind of language learner did she consider herself?

Jenny's English learning experience is presented here by reviewing her family background and her prior English learning experiences at three educational stages; that is, kindergarten, elementary school, and junior high school. Then, Jenny's goals toward English learning and attitudes toward the culture of the U.S. are covered to reach a better understanding of how she looked upon herself as a language learner. Finally, how the three significant others, her mother, father, and teachers influence her are also presented.

Jenny's Family Background and Previous English Learning Experiences at School

Jenny is a 15-year-old junior high school student in HsinChu City, Taiwan. She comes from a middle-class family. Her parents work as engineers in HsinChu Science Park, which are often regarded as high-pay positions. They devote a lot of time and money to Jenny's English education by choosing good English learning institutions and preparing a supportive learning environment at home for her. For example, she went to a Chinese-English bilingual kindergarten, took many English courses offered by language schools, joined various kinds of English activities and participated in a variety of contests and camps. Her teacher described her as an "extremely diligent, engaging student who always tries to perform well, especially when it comes to English learning." (Casual talk with Jenny's home-room teacher, August, 2011) Her mother felt proud that her daughter's name is often on the honor roll. Since little, Jenny has always been regarded as a competent student whose performance has always been above average.

The time Jenny spent in kindergarten was the critical time that influenced her attitude toward English learning. At the age of six, Jenny was sent into a Chinese-English bilingual kindergarten and began her English-learning journey there. In that bilingual environment, Jenny had to use English for communication for half of a day, and on the other half she could speak Mandarin, her mother tongue. She started trying out the

language naturally in that "comfortable" (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) immersion environment because

no one projected strange eyesights but only saying some encouraging praises when I tried to speak English. That's very different from the environment in junior high school. I like it! It's just like...I don't have much pressure. (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

That is to say, she was immersed in a whole-English environment for several hours a day in that bilingual kindergarten. In the kindergarten she experienced the fun of language learning by doing activities, playing games, and doing projects. The learning atmosphere, the teachers' teaching methods, and the activities there were all fascinating for her. The time in kindergarten was critical for Jenny because it is due to the wonderful learning experience there that she became highly-motivated in English learning and has been eager to study the language. For her, English was "important and interesting." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

After kindergarten, she entered a public elementary school which started English education from the basic-level lessons that Jenny had already mastered. Studying alphabets, phonics and the basic vocabulary again made Jenny feel bored in class. In her mind, English learning in elementary school is "easy and fun, but not challenging enough" (Pre-visit interview, August, 2011). Therefore, she started reading other English materials her parents had prepared for her at home. She also asked her parents to send her to language schools for supplementary learning. Her attendance at language schools brought her the new experience of doing different kinds of activities and entering various competitions. She gained confidence and a sense of achievement through taking part in those activities and competitions. The fun and exciting parts of those activities strengthened her motivation to pursuit the success of learning the language. She did win some awards and honor for herself, which inspired her tremendously. Since then, English

has become the most important subject that she endeavors to master.

As for her English learning at the junior high school stages, she appreciated the help that the teachers provided in enhancing her knowledge of grammar and vocabulary. Because of her hard-work, she always earns high grades in paper-and-pencil tests. However, she feels worried about her oral skills and fluency because chances of practicing speaking were limited in the junior high school learning environment. She expressed her aspiration for mastering the language in terms of the four skills.

I really need to practice my English because I feel my ability decaying day after day, especially my oral ability. I memorize many words but my oral is just poor! I feel my English proficiency at the present stage become poorer than in the kindergarten. That is horrible! I really hope I can speak fluent English without fear and hesitation with foreigners. So I need to improve it, especially oral skills! (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

Also, she desired for a positive immersion environment so that she could naturally acquire the language. “If I can live in a place where I can comfortably use the language and pick up phrases whenever possible, I can learn more quickly and naturally.” (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

Jenny's Goals towards English Learning and Attitudes towards the Culture of the U.S.

Jenny is the kind of girl that has clear study and career goals in her mind. She sets several goals for herself. First, she learns English for its practical use as a tool for communication, not as a required subject to study. She does not just memorize the words, phrases, or grammatical points that teachers teach her but tries to understand their meanings and use them in different contexts. In fact, she longs for opportunities to use the

language to interact extensively with others in her daily life. For example, she volunteered to take part in English camps or such competitions as speech or spelling ones to seize the chance of really using the language. She desires to speak English with others, especially English native speakers. Once, she initiated a chat with a foreigner she met in Nan-Liao Fish Port when she went bicycle-riding with her family there. She chatted with the foreigner without fear or hesitation. When she recalled this, she said "I would not feel scared. Instead, I felt I FINALLY have this chance. Now a foreigner was just right there. I just cannot lose it! I want to talk to him. After all, I learn English for this moment."

(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

In other words, she regards the language as a mean of communicating with others, so she would not miss any chance of really using it in her daily life.

Second, her final goal of studying English is to master the language for an imagined future, not for the present exams in school context.

I think English is important in my future life because I want to go to the U.S. to study....and maybe become a tour guide or a translator there. I want to travel to many places, and English is the global language. So, mastering it is important!

(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

In her imagined future, English plays an important role with regard to her career and personal development. Unlike most EFL learners in Taiwan, she never restricts her English learning in textbooks or materials at school because "textbooks is not enough... and a little boring. They are all about the grammar stuff! I do some extra things at home"

(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She exposes herself to other English learning resources and does some self-learning. She develops good habits of reading extracurricular materials. When she reads novels or stories such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, she enjoys not only the plot but also the language. During the process of reading, when encountering some new or difficult words, she does not feel frustrated but just skips the

difficult words first and then goes back to look them up in the dictionary whenever needed. She also listens to English songs to enjoy the lyrics and picks up English phrases at the same time. She does these because learning English does not merely mean getting high grades on the present tests but is a continuous preparation for the future use. She believes that "grades are not the most important thing. The overall English proficiency is more meaningful and important " (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) and she will not judge her success or failure of language learning based on the grades at school.

Finally, she learns English for herself, not for someone else such as parents or teachers. Unlike many teenagers that are unclear about their personal goals or future lives, Jenny has dreams of doing further study in the U.S., traveling around the world, or even working as a tour guide or a translator in the U.S. To achieve these goals, she devotes a great deal of time and effort in English learning for personal future satisfactory achievement. Though her parents have high expectation of her and do exert some pressure upon her, what motivates her most is her clear future goals. It's that kind of intrinsic motivation that prompts her to do all the studies for self-realization.

In addition to her clear goals in mind, Jenny is distinguishing in that she is a learner that welcomes and embraces challenges. Using the learned patterns or phrases in restricted contexts is not satisfying to her. She is eager to use what she has learned more freely in different contexts so as to internalize them. For example, she expressed to the researcher that the mechanical pattern drills in junior high school English class are "kind of boring and provide limited help to my overall language proficiency." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She desires to have more chances of answering open-ended questions and giving personal responses and opinions.

I have little chances speaking with others or making personal comments, maybe because of the time in class. We only speak controlled patterns, even in the English camp when we speak with some foreign teachers or the students with

good English proficiency That's disappointing for me! (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

She seeks for opportunities to communicate for meaningful purposes regardless of the threat that she may not be able to comprehend and respond well. Though she admitted that all these tasks display different degrees of challenges to her, she would not hesitate to take the challenges because " I am not afraid of making mistakes. I want more chances." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She will not lose her courage because of some temporary frustrations, either. Instead, those challenges could help her progress and she regards every task as a chance of personal linguistic improvement.

Jenny cultivates a perfect image on Americans. She appreciates Americans' lifestyle, their life attitude, and their culture. In her imagined American community, people, always wearing big smiles on their faces, are friendly to others. Also, they are so "kind-hearted that they are always ready to help others." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) What is more important, they are "confident, graceful, cultivated, and open-minded instead of being reserved. That's what I admire most." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) As a matter of fact, in Jenny's parents and peers' minds, she is an outgoing and conversational girl. However, in her own opinion, when compared with Americans, she is not confident and poised enough. She admires these features so much that she wants to retain and further develop them.

For Jenny, the country America seems to provide the image of an "ideal paradise" (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) to reside in. When talking about the U.S., she could not refrain her yearning, saying that "They are open, friendly and kind." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) Due to her impression that "most Americans are good guys"(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011), the country they live in becomes an ideal place that have many good neighbors around. In her imagined American community, there are no such dark sides as dirty words or bad public security, which are extremely annoying to her. In that

imagined community, "they [people] live comfortably with sufficient personal space, rather than in the crowded living environment in Taiwan." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) Moreover, living with neighbors that are well-cultivated and have good habits of living is important to her.

There are also some cultural aspects arousing Jenny's curiosity. For example, she had learned from the foreign teachers that Americans' attitude toward sex is pretty different from Chinese's. When speaking of some America-specific animals such as skunks, she becomes excited and keeps asking teachers questions. When she talked about cartoons like *The Simpsons* and the series like *Friends*, she enjoyed those shows and animations which allowed her to peep into the American cultures through the tubes. She also felt curious about the cultural differences between the western and the oriental cultures because " I was told that they are very different. But indeed what is the world like? I wanna see how different they are " (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

What Kind of Language Learner does Jenny Consider Herself

Overall, Jenny looks upon herself as "a positive and enthusiastic English learner"(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) who bears an imagined American community in mind. Indeed, from her parents' point of view, she is "courageous, spirited, and has clear goals in mind." (Causal talk with Jenny's mom, August, 2011) Her participation in the present study is indicative of her desire to gain more practice in English and more reflection on her own language learning. Her affiliations with her imagined American community is apparent. She wants to become a member of her imagined American community, so she is enthusiastic about the task of English learning. Her aspiration can be seen from her choice of learning activities. She enjoys joining English camps, activities, games, contests, and even having a real conversation with foreigners instead of doing the

controlled and restricted pattern drills in class. She also places strong emphasis on her speaking ability in order to communicate with others. She repeated her worries of losing the oral ability during the interview more than five times by saying that "My oral skills are decreasing. I am afraid of not being able to communicate with others....after all, it's the most important skill of a language." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She strongly believes that English is a tool for communication, not a subject to study. Though there are quite a few challenges during her learning process, all these will ultimately help her achieve her goals in the long run.

The Impact of the Significant Others

Jenny's English learning experiences and her attitude towards them were influenced by both her parents and her teachers. Jenny's mother plays an important role during the process of Jenny's language learning by creating a good English learning environment for her and supervising her progress. She sent Jenny to a bilingual kindergarten in the hope of her naturally using English to communicate with peers as well as teachers. Jenny's mother did so because "she has really high expectations of me and keeps reminding me of the importance of English all the time." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She believed that such kind of immersion learning environment is a good place for Jenny to not only develop her English proficiency but also cultivate her interest in the language and the target American culture. She is the kind of mother that hopes her child to have a bright future; therefore, she tries to give her daughter the best in order not to lose at the starting point. She also sent Jenny to language schools for more English exposure. In addition to the formal curriculums at school, Jenny's mom also encourages her to do self-learning at home. She bought a lot of English listening and reading materials. She plays English songs at home for unconscious language acquisition. It proves to be effective because

Jenny told the researcher that " I think it is helpful because I enjoy listening to them and I do learn some vocabulary after listening to them many times. I can catch up with the rhythm and sing. It is a pretty good way of English learning." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

After preparing everything for Jenny, Jenny's mother starts to monitor Jenny's learning. She reminds Jenny to get a book to read during her free time. She asks Jenny to practice speaking English with her elder brother several times a week to build up the habit of expressing herself in English. When hearing of the information about the short-term study-trip from the neighbor, she urged Jenny to study hard to win the chance of going abroad.

Jenny's mother is significant in her language learning process in that she plays the role of a resource provider and a supervisor. She creates a good English learning environment, preparing a variety of language learning opportunities and encourages her daughter to seize the chances. She monitors Jenny's progress during the process and regulates her language learning by guiding her step by step, experience by experience, steering toward the success of language learning.

Jenny's father also has influence on her English learning by setting a role model and creating an imagined community of proficient English users for her. His high English proficiency makes him the model that Jenny respects. Due to the need of his job as a senior engineer, Jenny's father often uses English at work. Jenny admires her father's English proficiency, especially his oral skills. Her father sometimes speaks English with her at home. From her father's example, she deeply believed that English proficiency can bring her a lot of advantages.

If your English is good enough, you will find a satisfying job. You can go on business trips by yourself and do business with people around the world. You can fly to many places and travel around the world without language barrier.

The benefits are many! So, I know I want my English to be as good as my dad.
(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

All these benefits brought by English proficiency motivated Jenny to become a successful English learner just like her father so that she can become a member of her imagined American community. Every time when she encounters difficulty, her father's image and encouragement always support her to regain courage and confidence. As a result, we may say that Jenny's father who supplies the image of a successful English user can be regarded as a model that Jenny can imitate and follow in her English learning process.

Jenny's parents also remind Jenny of the importance of English. Jenny expressed that,

they just keep repeating that you gonna to use it in the future. It's useful.

Learning English is extremely important. Every day, every time, everywhere!

And finally, it seems natural for me everybody needs to learn English, and yes, I gonna to use it one day in the future. (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

When being asked why they pay so much attention to Jenny's English language education, Jenny's mother responded that they believe "English is a world language and mastering it can help people participate in the global community." (Causal talk with Jenny's mom, August, 2011) From Jenny as well as her parents' words, it seems obvious that English can provide them a brighter future and a better world. Under her parents' monitoring, Jenny not only has a high expectation of herself but also develops a positive attitude toward and interest in the task of English learning.

Compared with her parents, Jenny's English teachers play no less important roles in her journey of English learning. Overall, Jenny praised the language instruction that she had received because she expressed that the teachers in early stage (i.e., kindergarten and elementary school) cultivated my interest in language learning and helped me build good

foundation in English learning and the teachers in my teens (i.e. junior high school) advanced my knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary. (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) Thanks to the teachers' proper guidance, she can become a happy and enthusiastic English learner.

What is especially worthy of mentioning is the foreign teachers' influence on her. They affected Jenny in two ways: first, their teaching styles and strategies fitted Jenny's learning styles and needs; and second, their sharing of their experiences in their native or other foreign countries motivated her to do further study of the target language and deeper exploration of the target culture. What is most unforgettable is the foreign teachers' help in kindergarten. Due to its bilingual nature of the kindergarten, Jenny was forced to use English for communication there. It is helpful because "though it seemed to be difficult at first in a young age, I think I did make great improvement, especially in my oral skills." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) The teachers there gave students a supportive environment that encouraged them to express themselves freely. They emphasized phonics, the correspondences between alphabets and sounds and every-day English a lot. They also played games, used group works, asked students to search for information on the Internet and do reports. With the guidance of those teachers, she felt the task of English learning "fun and easy!" (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) She even regarded English as her mother tongue. In her daily life, sometimes she just spoke out some English phrases or words naturally when she couldn't find appropriate Chinese words to use. In such a supportive and comfortable learning environment, she made a great stride in speaking, spelling and vocabulary recognition. Though she was kind of forced to speak English, she enjoyed and appreciated the learning experience in the kindergarten where she can learn naturally and happily without much pressure. Her positive attitude toward English learning is therefore cultivated and strengthened under the influence of the foreign teachers.

Besides the foreign teachers' teaching methods and strategies, their introduction of different accents or customs and the sharing of their experiences in the U.S. as well as other countries widened Jenny's horizon and inspired her interest in American culture. For example, she was curious about the smell of skunks when her teacher talked about the animals in the U.S. When discussing about the cultural differences among countries, she felt amazed at Americans' attitude toward sex. It is the foreign teachers' sharing of the "exotic flavors" that attracted her a lot. Due to the teachers' sharing of experiences in the U.S., Jenny longed for the "English world" with "refined, cultivated, and respectful culture." (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011)

Jenny really looked forward to paying a visit to the U.S. one day and experiencing all the wonders by herself. It is because of the foreign teachers' guidance that she started to appreciate the cultural or accentual differences among countries and cultures. Thanks to the foreign teachers' teaching strategies and methods which advanced her English proficiency and their introduction of cultural information which cultivated her interest in the target language and the target culture, Jenny became highly motivated in English learning in the hope of going abroad one day to experience all those excitement by herself.

During the Short-term Study Trip

- b. During her trip to the states, what challenges, critical events, and significant others did she encounter?

To gain a fuller understanding of Jenny's short-term SA trip in the U.S, her English learning experience there, especially the critical events that happened, the challenges she faced and her responses to them, and the significant others during the time, her host family mother and sister, are described.

Challenges Jenny Faced and her Responses

Jenny encountered some challenges during her SA trip in the U.S., including language barriers, cultural differences and her emotional struggles. No matter whether they were enjoyable or not, the challenges she faced all enriched her trip in the U.S. With a clear sense of purpose in her mind that she was there to practice her language and experience the culture of the U.S., she bravely faced, embraced, and later solved these difficulties.

First, Jenny's linguistic proficiency proved to be inadequate though she seemed to be quite competent in the EFL environment in Taiwan. There were still a few moments of conversation breakdown or incomprehensible exchanges. Upon arrival, she found it hard to catch up with the Americans because "They speak in [at] an amazing speed!" (Diary, 10/29/2011) Therefore, she had to ask them to slow down or repeat what they had said. In addition to the listening problem, she also had a hard time expressing herself occasionally because "It is not hard to talk, but sometimes it is just hard to pronounce [express exactly] what you want to say." (Diary, 10/29/2011) Also, she suffered a lot from her limited vocabulary. She mentioned one example: one day one of her schoolmates asked her to hurry up because "the period" was going to start. She was confused because for her the word "period" is the punctuation that shows up in the end of a sentence. After her host sister's explanation,

Finally I realize the "period" means "class", not the punctuation in my mind!

It's difficult to understand! In English there are a huge number of words with multiple meanings. That really embarrassed me a lot! (Post-SA interview, November, 2011)

She also felt a little frustrated when she could not understand others or find appropriate phrases. In all, though she had already prepared herself for situations like this,

the language barrier sometimes still made her skeptical of her own ability to survive in the U.S.

Though the language barrier seemed to have caused some embarrassing moments for Jenny, as an extremely positive and enthusiastic language learner, she recovered from the frustration soon and tried to solve the problems. She took an electronic dictionary with her and looked words up whenever needed. She also turned to her host sister, Vivian, for help and discussed with her the meanings of unfamiliar words. When she encountered some incomprehensible discourses, she would try hard to get herself understood. Of course, there were still some moments that she just skipped the topics by pretending she understood them, but she never gave up these chances of language practice. It is through the genuine interaction with English native speakers that she could practice and therefore improve her English.

In addition to the linguistic challenges, Jenny also experienced cultural shocks that would be interesting but sometimes frustrating to her. Without sufficient cross-cultural awareness, Jenny landed on the U.S. with a sense of admiration of American culture. She felt eager to appreciate what her imagined community is like and to figure out how different it is from her Chinese community. She encountered a big difficulty immediately on the first day in the U.S. which lingered for a long time; that is, she did not know how to appropriately address her host family members. There are four members in her host family: the father, a typical white with blue eyes; the mother, a half-Indian; the older sister, Vivian, a seventh grader in high school; and a younger brother. It is a core family just like the one she has back in Taiwan. However, when put in the different culture, the difficulty arose when she needed to address them.

I really don't know how to call my host mother! It's a super big struggle for me! In Chinese culture, we were told to call the elder female lady "aunt" and we have to show our respect by choosing an appropriate tone. However, the

foreign teachers in kindergarten told me that Americans have different fashions of interaction with parents or the elders. They call their family members, including their parents, by their names. What is even more strange, I heard the youngest brother call his mom "mama", meaning mother, and his sister "Jie-jie", meaning the elder sister in Mandarin. I got really confused! I have no idea which choice among aunt, mom, or just her first name is appropriate for my host mother. (Post-SA interview, November, 2011)

Similarly, calling her host sister is difficult because "I thought 'Jie-jie' is strange, for she is not my real sibling. But just calling her name Vivian seemed too intimate because we are not that close." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) The cultural difference of using the addresses confused her a lot.

For the following eight days, many cultural lessons emerged one after another. Some of them were enjoyable for her. For example, she spent a joyful Halloween with her host family by carving pumpkins, dressing-up in Halloween costumes, and going trick-or-treating along the street. "I like this Halloween because I have never carved a pumpkin. I carved Jack, the character in *The Nightmare before Christmas*. Though carving it really took a lot of time and effort, I still like it." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) The creative costumes and house decorations during her trick-or-treating opened her eyes and of course the result, a huge amount of candy, amazed her. She expressed her excitement in her diary that "I really like today. I thought it is the first real Halloween I had celebrated." (Diary, 10/31/2011) Besides the festival of Halloween, the experience of going to church was also novel for Jenny. Unlike the image of a place for mere religious ceremony, Jenny went to the church to listen to stories, sing worship songs, and even play games with her peers. "I never think that going to church can be so fun!" (Diary, 10/30/2011) What is more, Jenny's host mother invited her to prepare dinner together. During the process she introduced to Jenny some vegetables and spices that Jenny had

never seen before. Interesting cultural learning was certainly pleasant.

There were also some shocking moments that were caused by the cultural differences between the American culture and the Oriental one. For example, Jenny's host family members all take a shower in the morning instead of at night just like most Chinese do. Though that way Jenny could take her time taking a shower leisurely during the whole night time, it was still surprising for Jenny that their shower habit is so different from hers. What is also astonishing is the Americans' eating habits. The food there is usually cold, big-sized, and super sweet. Jenny drew her own conclusion that "That is exactly why the middle-aged Americans, especially women, look chubby!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) She also experienced Americans' extravagance and non-eco-friendliness in that they just threw all the usable straws away after using them in games.

However, there are certain good parts that Jenny admires in the U.S. For example, the streets in America are clean with good public hygiene. Also, Americans pay attention to their living quality because most of them live in a comfortable living environment with beautiful buildings and good views. Though it has been said that Americans are less caring to their family members, what Jenny experienced in person is that "they would not start dinner until everyone was at table and ready. That's very different from what I have learned before!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) Those cultural shocks made the trip an "adventure"(Post-SA interview, November, 2011), but she appreciated those moments that provided her the chance of a deeper understanding of the American culture.

Another common theme in Jenny's diary is her emotional struggles during these days in a foreign and unfamiliar place. Since this trip was her first time abroad and the destination of her trip was her long-dreamed U.S., her feeling was mixed. On the one hand, her inconceivable excitement overwhelmed her, writing on the first day that "I've wished to come here for many years, and today I've just made it." (Diary, 10/29/2011)

On the other hand, she admitted her anxiety about the foreign environment and her need to build up relationship with others such as her host family members and schoolmates. She tried hard to establish relations with persons she met; however, on Day 2 of her log she wrote "sometimes I would feel not in their group" (Diary, 10/30/2011) when she was not invited to join the talk between Vivian and her friends. Such anxiety was upsetting for so young a girl in a foreign country alone. Moreover, on the first day of school, when Velarie, who kept her company at school, took her to class, she felt strange and uneasy, writing "I felt really stupid today, because when Velarie took me to classes, people see [saw] her like the tourist guide in the zoo and I'm the monkey in the cage (waiting for me to perform eating banana like that)." (Diary, 11/1/2011) Her anxiety of building up relations and interacting with others troubled her a lot at the beginning. Later her classmates and host family members' kindness and friendliness released her tension, so she could interact with them with ease. Finally, on the last day, she wrote "I really like them because they are all friendly." (Diary, 11/7/2011)

What troubled Jenny a lot were Americans' attitudes toward Chinese, both the language and the people. She felt upset that every time she spoke Chinese with Valerie, Jenny's schoolmate whom Jenny went to classes with, or Vivian, Jenny's host sister who kept Jenny company after school and at night, they always responded in English regardless of the fact that they do learn some Chinese. Valerie even did so to her parents who are from Kaohsiung, Taiwan. That caused her to wonder if their unwillingness to speak Chinese is because they think that Chinese is inferior to English. That kind of feeling hurt her and she started to wonder if there is any problem with the identity. Another incident happened in geometry class. The teacher asked Jenny if she could do a math question with an annoying and disdainful tone. She felt uncomfortable in that situation because it seemed that the teacher was impolitely questioning her math ability; hence, she pretended that she did not hear the question and did not say a word to him

because "the feeling is just strange! It's like he looked down on me, maybe because I am a Chinese, not as smart s Americans?!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) Among all, what hurt her most was her schoolmate's comment on her accent. One day in science class she overheard a girl telling another classmate that she wanted to be like the "Asian girl". It was obvious that the "Asian girl" meant Jenny because she was the only foreign student. When Jenny asked her why she would like to be an Asian, the girl responded to her that the accent of Asians is "cute." Although the word "cute" does not seem to be that negative, she was still deeply hurt because "I got the feeling that my accent is not standard. I am non- native-like...or even strange to them!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) She reacted with anger at first because she felt insulted, but gradually a sense of inferiority conquered her. In the post-visit interview, she expressed her ambivalence that

It's hard.... and strange! I want to sound native-like, just like the native speakers. I want to speak good English. But, I want to keep the foreign characteristics as well. It may be the representation of my identity. I can show it off when needed. (Post-SA interview, November, 2011)

That is, on the one hand, she wanted to sound native-like, but on the other, keeping the foreign characteristics of her accent can be an indicative of her identity as a foreigner. Her ambivalence was evident.

Jenny's English Learning Experiences and Critical Events in the U.S.

During the time in the U.S., two critical events happened that respectively perfected and damaged Jenny's imagined American community. Jenny came to the U.S. with a romantic image of her imagined American community and with that impression in mind she regarded everything in the U.S. wonderful. Her naïve impression on the country was further strengthened when one day some senior citizens affectionately called her

"Honey" and "Sweetheart". "That surprised me a lot! I was overwhelmed because such addresses kind of meant intimacy and close relationship. They are nice to me!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) Jenny felt herself accepted by the members of her imagined American community and had become one member of the community. She was too surprised to believe that she could develop such a close relationship with the American community and the community members who do not seem to be so close to her. That was a great shock for her. From then on, she further confirmed her belief in the faultless imagined American community.

However, her image of a perfect America was damaged because of another incident: the unhappy negotiation with a clerk in a store. On the eighth day of her trip, Jenny left her coat in a store in a store in a shopping mall. Jenny found that immediately and went back to the store right away. She said to the clerk "I am wondering if I lost my coat here." The clerk responded "I didn't see any coat here!" without any slight rising of her head. She said it slowly with an impatient tone. Jenny's further request was cut off by the clerk' "There is no coat here! PLEASE!" Jenny could do nothing but walk out of the store. She was so angry that she wrote down in her diary "this is the first time I felt that Americans isn't so friendly and helpful. The clerk is [put on] a bad face and doesn't [didn't] really mind me....I felt angry because of her attitude and service." (Diary, 11/5/2011) Later, when hearing of the incident, Jenny's host mother volunteered to take her back to the store again. This time, another clerk found it right in the lost-and-found basket and expressed her apology to them. In the post-visit interview, Jenny expressed to the researcher that she interpreted this as a problem of identity. Jenny thought that the first clerk was reluctant of providing help because of her identity as a foreigner there. "After all, she did not want have a glimpse of me!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) This event brought her the feeling of an outsider of the community again. After that, her "American image" was not perfect anymore! She noted down her understanding in her diary "Not all of them are

good!" (Diary, 11/5/2011)

The Impact of the Significant Others during the Trip

During Jenny's trip in the U.S., what influenced and helped her most are her host mother, who led her to experience the American culture and lifestyles, and the host sister, who provided linguistic help and source of understanding the culture of American teenagers.

Jenny's first impression of her host mother is a strict mother, "a not so typical American mother, more like a Chinese." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) At first she was scared and kind of worried that she could not communicate with her, but very soon she found her nice and kind. She took Jenny to visit friends and neighbors to create more opportunities for language interaction and cultural experience for Jenny. There she experienced the American "home cinema"; they would put all the pillows and heavy coats on the floor, and then they would lay down on the floor, huddled, and watched movies on TV together. This experience was special for Jenny because she was surprised to find that the American mothers would not scorn their kids for making the pillows or clothes dirty, but instead, she did so with them and enjoyed the happy movie time together. She noted down her excitement in the diary that "this is the feeling I want to catch in the U.S. during this trip. The feeling of FREEDOM." (Diary, 11/4/2011) In addition, the host mother suggested that they went ice-skating after realizing that Jenny had never done this activity before. Jenny felt grateful for this proposal because 'Skating on ice is my dream, and I just made it come true! I really have to thank my lovely homema!" (Diary, 11/6/2011) Other than the two special activities, during her trip, Jenny's host mother also took her to many iconic places to let her experience the American life. For example, they visited a local "corn maze" which is never seen in her native country, and she learnt some geography there. She enjoyed the process of window-shopping in different shopping

centers or stores where millions of new stuff attracted her eyes. They called at the campus of Stanford University where Jenny was awed by the academic atmosphere there. The host mother also invited Jenny to join her cooking session to take a look at various kinds of vegetables, fruits, and spices uniquely American. Thanks to her host mother's effort, those activities all brought Jenny more cultural knowledge and deeper cultural understanding.

In addition to taking Jenny to experience the American lifestyle, Jenny's host mother also volunteered to help when Jenny lost her coat in a store in a shopping mall. She stood out like a soldier, protecting and guarding Jenny's rights. She took Jenny back to the store and helped her negotiate with the clerks. Jenny wrote "Without my host mother, I think I could never get my coat back." (Diary, 11/8/2011) In all, due to her host mother's help and support, Jenny's nervousness in the foreign context was released and she can experience the American lifestyle to get a better understanding of the people and the culture there.

As for Jenny's host sister, Vivian, she not only provided Jenny with source of understanding linguistic use but also guided her to have a glimpse of American teen culture by involving her in her social circles. Though Jenny worried about her relationship with Vivian at first, the two girls seemed to establish an intimate rapport with each other. She would help her with unfamiliar words when they walked on streets. She would patiently explain the meanings of the words and how they are used in daily life. She helped Jenny to search for appropriate phrases when Jenny could not express herself well. "My worries and tensions were greatly released because of her company. I really need to thank her." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) What is more, she involved Jenny in her social circles and helped her build up relations with the schoolmates. For example, she took Jenny to the volleyball school team and let her watch them practice. Jenny made some friends from the school team and gained a better understanding of the

sport as well as their attitudes towards it. They dressed up and went trick-or-treating along the street together on Halloween. She took Jenny with her when she went to the volleyball team, the party, and her friends' meetings, involving Jenny in her social circles. It is no doubt that Vivian's effort provided Jenny the chance of appropriate language use and deeper cultural understanding of teenagers. Moreover, she also shared feelings and gossips with Jenny. In a sense, she engaged Jenny in all sorts of English-language-mediated activities, such as after-class interaction with peers and family members. Owing to her company, Jenny can experience the real friendship that goes beyond the linguistic gap.

Three Months after the Short-term SA Experience

- c. Three months after Jenny's trip, how does she perceive herself as a language learner and how does she think about the trip, its relationship to her current English learning activities and the task of English learning?

To grasp a picture of how this short-term SA trip may affect Jenny's English learning, some of the changes related to Jenny's English learning and her attitude are discussed. First, the changes of Jenny's attitude toward the uncomfortable events in the U.S. are addressed. Then, the changes of Jenny's English learning methods and strategies are presented. What follow separately are the changes of her attitude toward the task of English learning and the role English plays in her life. Next, Jenny's attitude toward her imagined American community is revisited. Finally, from a language learner's point of view, some obstacles of learning a foreign language in Taiwan which is an EFL environment is discussed. All of the above information aims to answer the third sub-question.

The Changes of her Opinions toward the Two Uncomfortable Events in the U.S.

Jenny revised her opinions toward the two unpleasant incidents in the U.S., the conflict with the geometry teacher and the negotiation with the clerk, three months after coming back to Taiwan. One of the two events that was threatening to her identity was that she lost her coat in a store. The impatient and indifferent attitude of the clerk made her angry because she naturally associated the clerk's unfriendly attitude with her identity as a foreigner there. However, in the follow-up interview, which was held three months after the trip, she expressed her uncertainty about her anger, by saying that "I don't know. Maybe it's just because of the age. Maybe she's just a teenager. She got this part-time job....Or maybe she is older than me.... ." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) She explained the clerk's arrogance and indifference by her young age and being a teenager. "She might just feel impatient toward everything and everyone, especially the one younger than her." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) With this alternative interpretation, Jenny felt much better and was more forgiving toward the clerk.

As for the conflict in geometry class, once feeling humiliated and insulted, Jenny felt much more embarrassed than angry three months after the trip. In the follow-up interview, Jenny reflected on her behaviors at that time and confessed to the researcher that she might have irritated the geometry teacher in the first class because the cellphone her host family gave her rang in class. The teacher got very angry because that annoying noise lasted for a while though Jenny felt innocent because she was not aware that it was her cellphone that was ringing. Hence, the geometry teacher might have developed a bad impression of her after the first class, leading to the later event of his questioning of Jenny's math ability. She recalled her improper reaction to the teacher that

I just don't [did not] want to explain to HIM...because he is just...look[ed] down on me. And actually the other students were taking a test and I didn't

want to bother them. So I just kept silent even when I knew that he was calling me. (Follow-up interview, February, 2012)

Worried that this event might merely be a misunderstanding caused by two different perspectives, Jenny blamed herself for not making herself understood at that moment in that context. She also reasoned the teacher's impolite questioning of her math ability by that Americans place strong emphasis on personal attitude and mutual respect. Hence, three months later, she would not interpret the event as the math teacher's contempt or disliking of her identity as a foreigner but as a "mere misunderstanding or miscommunication between the two." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) In other words, removed from the context, her identity as a foreign language learner was not as salient as she had thought; afterwards she was able to adopt a fairer and calmer attitude to reflect and resolve the conflict instead of just relating everything to her identity as a foreigner there.

The Changes of her English Learning Activities

Jenny has adopted some new English learning activities, especially listening and speaking. After the twelve-day immersion in an all-English environment, she realized that the better way to learn a language as well as its culture is to expose herself to an environment where everything had to be done using that particular language, thus, acquiring the language naturally through experience. In the post-visit interview, she expressed her strong desire of developing a good sense of language, expressing "I think having a good sense of the language is the primary job that I need to do now." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) To achieve this goal, after coming back, she started to spend more time listening to the radio in order to get used to different accents because "so many different accents in the U.S. made me confused." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012)

In addition to paying attention to the various accents, after experiencing the "cute accent" event, she started wondering why her accent was regarded as "cute" and how accent can affect people's impression on an individual. Hence, accent has become an important lesson in her English learning. Other than that, she also chose different topics and talked to herself from time to time to practice her fluency and expression. Extensive reading of novels and stories also provides her a great source of exposure to authentic English instead of the over-simplified one seen in class textbooks. She did these in the hope of becoming more accustomed to the language use. However, notwithstanding all those efforts, she still faced the dilemma of studying grammar hard or not. On the one hand, she felt grammar is just a sets of rules that are fixed and rigid; however, on the other, she needs it to explain the language uses whenever she encounters difficulty. What is more, those tons of grammatical exceptions in real daily usage almost drive her crazy. Hence, she told the researcher that she needed to develop her sense of language through exposing herself to a great number of linguistic data to get used to their uses. That way, she can overcome the problem of collocational uses and avoid confusion due to dual meanings and language exceptions.

The Changes of her Attitude toward the Task of English Learning and herself as an

English Learner

Jenny has new judgments toward the task of language learning and her identity as a language learner after the trip. She expressed her awareness of improving her English by saying that

thanks to those frustrations and misunderstandings, I can really feel the urgent need to improve my English. My proficiency is just in the "baby

level". I have to spend more time so that I can communicate confidently without hesitation. (Follow-up interview, February, 2012)

Though she has never been a proud language learner since little, this trip made her a more moderate and humble learner after seeing her inadequacy in the language during the trip. It is through this trip that she realized how far she still needs to go to achieve the so-called "native-like".

Moreover, after her genuine experience in the U.S. and the real participation in her imagined American community, now learning English becomes a "mission" (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) that she needs to accomplish so as to learn from the country and gain more participation in it. She mentioned that there are many good aspects in the U.S that are worthy of imitating. Hence, she has to equip herself with high English proficiency first, and then she can go to the U.S. for further-study and learn from the country at the same time. After that, she wanted to come back to Taiwan to provide contribution to her native country. Hence, learning English has become a "mission."

In addition to the previous-mentioned positive effects, as a matter of fact, Jenny also revealed her ambivalence in the task of English learning from time to time during the follow-up interview. That is to say, her feelings toward English learning have become mixed, too. She feels the need to master this foreign language, but she is afraid of losing her own identity as a Taiwanese, especially after experiencing some uncomfortable incidents which she interpreted as a harm to her identity in the U.S. It seems that devoting to English learning will make her "forget the root." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) Also, mastering the language to get a satisfactory future career and to communicate with the global community without any barrier is what she has dreamed of. However; keeping her own identity and dignity is no less important. What is more, after the trip, her frustration of learning the language was also strengthened because the language seems rule-governed, but there are so many exceptions. Moreover, learning the language well

might seem easy, but the cultural burdens it carries are so heavy. Does she need to identify with the whole cultural aspects as so to fully master the language? Those conflicting feelings all mixes up, influencing Jenny's attitude toward the task of English learning and herself as an English learner.

The Changes of the Role the Country America Plays in her Life and her Attitude toward her Imagined American Community

Jenny has new perspectives on the country America and her imagined American community after the trip. Before the trip, Jenny dreamed of "going to the U.S. for further study and even get her future career there" (Pre-SA interview, August, 2011) to become one member of her imagined American community. Nevertheless, after the real contact with the people of the US, some changes had happened. During the process, though English still plays an important role in her life, she made up her mind to go to the U.S. for further-study but not for life career. This trip brought her the awareness that she need to contribute to her native country. She expressed her responsibility and desire to do so in the last interview as follows:

I think I need to contribute to Taiwan. After all, it's the place I grow up and live in. I need to come back to "my country." I don't want to live in the U.S. anymore...Maybe just for my further study after high school or college. After graduation, I'll be back. (Follow-up interview, February, 2012)

Now America becomes only a country whose culture and lifestyles she admires but not a habitual place. She is clear that her native country is the place which she needs to devote to. What is more, she comes to the realization that by staying in a foreign country like Taiwan her good English proficiency can become a niche and she can utilize her

English proficiency to provide contribution. America has become a dreamed place that she admires but not a final destination of her life.

Though Jenny has a new perspective toward America after the trip, her positive attitude toward her imagined American community has not been revised much in the last interview. During her trip in the U.S., the romantic image of her imagined American community and her identity as an English learner have been repeatedly challenged by the uncomfortable treatments from the impatient clerk in the shopping mall, the arrogant geometry teacher at school, and some indifferent strangers she met on streets. It was disappointing for her to admit that her imagined American community was not as perfect as she had imagined before. But the warm welcome from her host family and the intimate relationship she had established with them, along with other friendly people she had met made her feeling toward America mixed and her attitude ambivalent. Three-months after coming back, she interpreted those uncomfortable events from another perspective and felt relieved. Her yearning for the American culture keeps increasing. "Thanks to the rich and fruitful experiences in the trip, I can really come to understand the country and its culture in person." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) Now she practices more imagination toward the community and itches for a try of staying in the community for a longer term to gain a deeper understanding of its culture and a fuller participation in it. Therefore, the trip has not changed her attitude toward her imagined American community much but has helped her come closer to the core of the country and its culture.

Obstacles of Learning a Foreign Language in an EFL Environment

After the short-term SA trip, Jenny reflected on her English learning process and the English learning environment in Taiwan and obtained some observations that she

regarded as pivotal. Although she has been looked upon as a quite successful English learner in her friends' eyes, the learning process is not as easy as what others had imagined. In other words, she encounters a lot of difficulties during the English learning journey in the EFL context in Taiwan.

First, her time to do these independent English learning is insufficient. This results from the heavy academic pressure under the educational system in Taiwan. Too much required schoolwork makes her too busy to squeeze out time for such extra-curricular self-learning. The tight class schedule, the long hours spent at school, huge amount of assignment from teachers of different subjects, and the mechanical drills and practices all made her as busy as a bee. Hence, her time for doing extra language learning is limited.

What also troubles Jenny a lot is the washback effect of the examination system in Taiwan that makes English teaching and learning in Taiwan utilitarianism. To prepare students for the senior high school entrance examination, which is paper-based composed of all multiple choice questions, most teachers limit most of their instruction to grammar and vocabulary explanation, inhibiting the time for speaking and listening practice. The examination trend also strengthens teachers' beliefs in English teaching practices. Jenny described herself "spending most of my time listening to teachers lecturing and taking down notes in class but little time is left for practicing using the language for communication." When the precious oral practice appears, they are mostly controlled or mechanical ones and are restricted to fixed responses. There is little room for free expression or independent research. In other words, students' active oral participation in class discussion is not encouraged in such learning environment. That's the big contrast between the education in America and Taiwan. Jenny prefers the American-style independent learning because students need to be actively responsible for their own learning by doing projects, personal research, or group report, instead of being passively pushed by the parents or homeroom teachers. That way, students can cultivate their

interests and develop their own specialty. However, Jenny cannot change the examination system; nor can she change the way English is taught in Taiwan.

Finally, the peer pressure impedes Jenny's English learning in Taiwan as an ESL environment. Very few friends would like to practice speaking English with her. When she speaks out in English unconsciously, she often gets frowned upon by her peers with mocking or unfriendly looks that stops her from doing so again. She has to keep reminding herself of avoiding that because peers would think it is strange and some even think she is trying to show off. Some would deride her trying to be American-like. Though she never regards her speaking English as an identity problem, but only as a chance for language practice and subconscious language acquisition, she still suppresses herself because of the peer pressure.

The above discussion aims to answer the three sub-questions of the research question, trying to understand how Jenny's experiences before, during, and after her first short-term study trip to the U.S. reveal potential challenges and identity change. Through reviewing Jenny's family background, prior English learning experiences, attitude towards English learning and American culture before the trip, a preliminary understanding of the participant and her background is reached. Next, challenges including the linguistic, cultural and emotional ones that Jenny encountered during the trip are described. Two critical events and significant others are also addressed to depict how Jenny's identity and imagined community were constantly changed. Finally, three months after the trips, the changes of Jenny's attitude and opinions towards the trip, the American culture and herself as a English learner are described.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, a portrayal of Jenny's English learning experiences before, during, and after her first short-term study trip to the U.S. is given. In this chapter, key themes related to foreign language learning (i.e., identity and imagined community) derived from the previous analysis are examined to explore Jenny's English learning history as a process of identity (re)construction. This way, a fuller understanding of the potential challenges and identity change that this short-term study trip brings to Jenny can be reached. Through the discussion of the themes identified, additional insights to second language learning is derived as well. This chapter is divided into two sections: first, the challenges Jenny faced during her SA trip; and second, Jenny's identity change in the SA context and the interaction between language learning and identity change.

Challenges

Jenny's story in the U.S. illustrated the kinds of challenges that language learners may encounter while studying abroad. This section addresses the difficulties that Jenny faced during her SA trip from three perspectives: her struggles to build up relations with members of her host family, her struggles to resolve the conflicts she experienced in school context, and her struggles to deal with the difficulties when interacting with target language speakers.

Struggles to Build up Relations with Members of her Host Family

Jenny had a hard time trying to establish relationship with others in the foreign context. Though she considered her personality to be "outgoing" and "sunny", the language barrier and unconscious anxiety toward the unfamiliar environment made it an extremely tough job to establish relations with her host mother, host sister, friends at school, and all the people she met on the first few days. She felt "my presence in the territory of the U.S. is strange and odd" (Diary, 10/29/2011) as she finally became aware that she was left alone in a foreign country without her own parents, friends, or her pet dog, on the night of arrival.

Feeling anxious in the unfamiliar environment, the first difficulty Jenny encountered was to get acceptance by members of her host family. The first impression of a strict and serious host mother frightened Jenny because her host mother talked little on the first day. She felt worried that she could not communicate with her. The American-style free and easy personality of Vivian, her host sister, unexpectedly created certain distance between Jenny and Vivian because "she is different.....so different from me! I think I am just anxious about everything, especially my relationship with them, my host family. So, everything is strange!" (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) Jenny felt Vivian unapproachable, which surprised herself a lot because Vivian acted just the way that she had yearned for before coming to the U.S. Jenny's anxiety of establishing relationship with her host family continued for the first few days. On Day 2 she wrote in her log that "sometimes I would feel not in their group." (Diary, 10/30/2012) when she was not invited to join Vivian and her friends' conversation. She clearly expressed her frustration of failing to get herself involved in Vivian's social circle. Like Alice's French learning process (Kinging, 2004), Jenny also struggled to gain access to social interaction in the foreign context in order to both gain acceptance and seize chances of

language practice.

A consistent theme in prior long-term SA studies by Kinginger (2004), Siegal (1995) and Wilkinson (1998) is long-term sojourners' struggles to find a comfortable position in the foreign context. The present study extends application of such contention to short-term SA learners. Jenny's feeling during the time in the U.S. was mixed: she became cheerful when feeling herself accepted as an insider of the American community; however, when finding that she was merely looked upon as an outsider (just like what she wrote on Day 2) and could not receive association with the American community, her depression was apparent. "I just wanna make friends with them, just like the friends in Taiwan, and become one member of them, but somehow there is a certain kind of gap." (Post-SA interview, September, 2011) Jenny, like many SA participants staying in the foreign context for a longer term, encountered lots of obstacles and had to solve the problems alone in an unfamiliar environment. Whenever she met frustrations, she reasoned those uncomfortable treatments with her identity as a foreigner there. Her struggle to position herself in the SA context suffered her a lot.

Due to the desired true immersion in the target language, home-stay has always been regarded as a preferable place for language learners to stay in during their SA trip (Ingram, 2005; Paige, Cohen, Kappler, Chi, & Lassegard, 2006). From Jenny's story mentioned in the previous chapter we can find that though Jenny experienced struggles building up relationships with her host family members at the beginning, it was still the host family members' guidance and assistance that Jenny could be exposed to different opportunities for learning the target language and experiencing the target culture of the U.S. They also provided her with what West (1992) called "protection" to help her overcome the anxiety in the unfamiliar context. Moreover, they understood and supported her efforts of language learning and tried to socialize her into their social circles so that she could gain more chances for language practice and improvement. Without their help,

Jenny could not have learned the target language as well as experienced the target culture in a comfortable and supportive environment. Home-stay did play a significant role in Jenny's short-term SA trip.

However, SA learners may not take advantages of the privileged chance of language practice in home-stay. That is, just putting learners in the home-stay context does not necessarily create opportunities for cultural awareness or linguistic gains (Rivers, 1998; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Wilkinson, 1998). Interestingly enough, for Jenny, though she appreciated the help and the interpersonal relationship provided by her host family, she expressed in the second interview that "I think it is in school that I speak most English. In home-stay, I speak less. In school, I have many classes, and I watch the school team practice after class. So I speak with classmates." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011). It is shown that Jenny thought school, rather than home-stay, was the most productive place for her language practice during the trip. To improve this situation, possible interventions should be done to both improve the quality of home-stay environment and to encourage students to engage in linguistically productive behaviors.

Struggles to Resolve the Conflicts in School Context

As a foreign visitor in the high school class in the U.S., Jenny encountered some difficulties, most of which were miscomprehension or miscommunication when interacting with peers or teachers. Among them, the conflict with the geometry teacher was so serious that it affected Jenny's attitude toward the American community as well as her interaction with the teacher. The teacher questioned Jenny's math ability with an annoying and susceptible tone. His query angered Jenny and she refused to respond to him by pretending that she did not hear him. She also chose not to cooperate with the teacher for the rest of her time in the class.

Jenny's reaction to the teacher's questioning of her ability was an usual teenage response to adults' query. It was straight-forward and impetuous of her to just refuse to speak a word with the teacher. This kind of conflict is not unusual in classes in Jenny's native country. But what made this conflict challenging for Jenny is the context: a totally unfamiliar foreign context. It is not hard to imagine that when the conflict happened in the SA context, the situation became worse because there would be a lot of additional factors such as identities, language barriers, or presupposing different modes of thinking, which may cause more serious misunderstandings.

This conflict depicted the potential problems of SA participants' short-term presence in class. Her "improper reaction" to this event blocked her possible chances of language practice in the geometry class because "I did not talk to her, so he [the teacher] did not try to talk to me as well." (Post-SA interview, November, 2011) For the teacher, it is true that Jenny would not stay long to interact with the class, but her presence already caused some change to the classroom dynamics. She did cause some ripples in the classroom since she was different and needed some special attention. Hence, in the teacher's eyes, Jenny was indeed a trouble. This conflict stopped the interaction between Jenny and the teacher, resulting in the loss of language practice and cultural learning in that class.

Therefore, it may be concluded that though Jenny's reaction of ignoring the geometry teacher was the usual teenage response to the uncomfortable learning environment, this reaction may cause more severe outcomes because she was a "language learner" in a "foreign" country. She was new and different in classes in that context. The teacher would need to give special care or attention to her because of her basic target language proficiency and her identity as a newcomer. Special efforts would be needed to maximize the learning opportunities. She might lose her chances of language practice and her participation of the target community because of the bad relationship with the teacher.

Hence, equipping SA participants with the skills of keeping good relationships with teachers as well as peers in the school context is important.

Jenny's reaction to the geometry teacher also illustrates how relations of power affect the interaction between the two. Many researchers orienting from a poststructuralistic perspective suggested the importance of power relations during SLA (Norton, 1995, 2000; Norton & McKinney, 2011; West, 1992). In Norton's (1995) study, a Canadian immigrant, Eva, decided to keep silent when her Canadian colleague, Gail, mocked her of her ignorance of the cartoon character, *Bart Simpson*. The relations of power between Gail as a target language speaker and Eva as a language learner were unequal because Eva's social identity was an immigrant in the workplace in Canada. Being positioned as “strange” because of her unfamiliarity with the character *Simpson*, which is quite societal-specific, Eva just kept silent because she was the subject of the discourse instead of the subject to the discourse just like Gail. That is, it is Gail who is more powerful to decide either to continue or to end the discourse.

For Jenny, the situation was pretty similar. Her identity in that classroom discourse was a language learner and a student, especially a foreigner; while the teacher is often regarded as an authority, a knowledgeable adult, and a proficient target language speaker in class. The power relations were unequal. The teacher was skeptical of Jenny's ability to answer the math question and therefore initiated the discourse; while Jenny chose the same strategy as Eva to just remain silent because she was the subject of the discourse. In that discourse, it was the teacher who had more power. Jenny, as a young language learner with only elementary English proficiency, could only use her silence to protest. Her reaction should be understood with regards to the situated power relations between them within the larger social structure so that the readers can realize why Jenny did not prove herself, defend for herself, or grasp the chance of language practice.

Jenny regretted her improper reaction to the geometry teacher three months later in

the last interview because she later interpreted the conflict as a result of miscommunication, leading to her misinterpretation of the teacher's intent. To her own reflection, she became more mature after the trip. Through this incidence, she knew more about the nature of (inter)cultural interaction. Different people in different cultures had their own way of communication and interaction. Being removed from the context, she would not interpret the teachers' words as an insult of either her math ability or her identity as a foreign language learner there. When she recalled this anecdote, she admitted that she might have irritated the teacher first because her cellphone rang in the first geometry class. She also regretted her failure to keep good relationship with the teacher. Jenny's alternative interpretation of the event and the awareness of taking improper reactions helped release the tension between Jenny and the teacher. If she had come to the realization earlier during her trip, she would have taken a friendlier attitude and better response to this event; hence better relationship with the teacher could have been built. If so, this conflict would not have become the obstacles of her target language learning and participation

Struggles to Deal with Difficulties when Interacting with Target Language Speakers

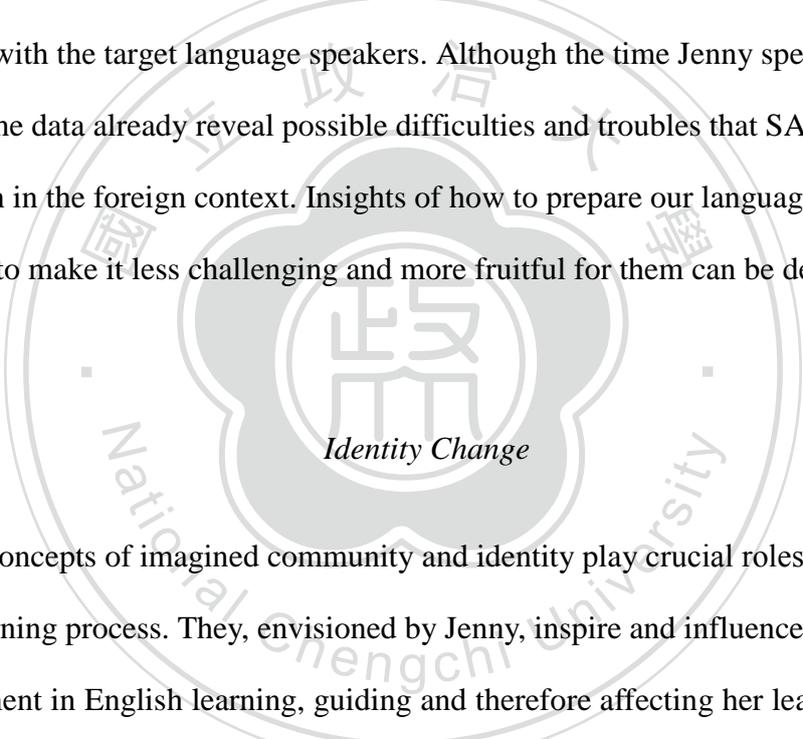
In addition to the difficulties in school contexts, Jenny also faced some troubles when dealing with her daily encounters in the foreign context alone. For example, she felt embarrassed and did not know what to do when the Americans refused her request of taking a picture with her. She became helpless when no one invited her to join their conversations. However, what troubled her most was the negotiation with the clerk in a store where she lost her coat. After finding her coat missing, Jenny returned to the store immediately but the clerk was so impatient and unfriendly to her that Jenny could not help but give up the idea of getting her coat back and leave. This instance evidenced the

difficulties that SA learners, especially young-aged students, may encounter when being put in a foreign context alone. Without the shelters of parents, SA learners have to handle everything by themselves in the unfamiliar environment. The challenges they have to face are various. What kind of people will they meet, what kind of environment will it be, and what kind of trouble do they have to deal with are all unknown. Removed of the protection of parents, adding the linguistic barrier and cultural difference, SA learners may feel unsecure and timid, especially when encountering some difficult situations or unfriendly treatments just like what the clerk had done to Jenny. However, this kind of interaction with the target language speakers is unavoidable when studying in the SA context. In fact, it is desirable since it provides chances of language practice and possible cultural learning. Therefore, preparing learners with enough cultural knowledge and the ability of coping with everything independently in the foreign context may not be sufficient for a successful SA trip but is absolutely needed.

From Jenny's point of view, part of her difficulties in the U.S. resulted from the social positioning (Norton, 2001). Jenny interpreted the geometry teacher's and the clerk's unfriendly attitude toward her as a result of her identity as a foreign language learner there. That is, she felt herself being positioned as inferior because of her identity in that context. Actually, many previous studies have explored language learners' resistance of social positioning in L2 context. Norton's (2001) immigrant women all encountered some frustrations while they were interacting with the Canadians and came to the realization that their position as immigrants restricts their access to language practice and learning. They struggled to overcome this kind of social positioning. For example, when one day a customer asked Eva, who migrated from Poland, if she "put on" the accent to get more tip, she responded she would rather not have this accent so that she would not need to bear this mocking. Mary, the American woman, resisted to be positioned as the female other imposed on her by Japanese through the use of her meishi

(business card) which gives information about her professional status as a teacher, consultant, and administrator at home and her societal position as a researcher in Japan(Siegal, 1996). Jenny, like the former female language learners, resisted to be positioned as an inferior and less capable female other in the foreign context.

To sum up, Jenny’s case shed some light on the complexity of situations or difficulties that SA learners have to face during their SA trips, including the emotional struggles of building up relations with others, and the efforts required to deal with the possible conflicts in school context and the problems that may happen in the daily interaction with the target language speakers. Although the time Jenny spent in the U.S. was short, the data already reveal possible difficulties and troubles that SA learners need to cope with in the foreign context. Insights of how to prepare our language learners for the SA trip to make it less challenging and more fruitful for them can be derived.



Identity Change

The concepts of imagined community and identity play crucial roles during Jenny’s English learning process. They, envisioned by Jenny, inspire and influence her goals of and investment in English learning, guiding and therefore affecting her learning trajectory. After examining Jenny's English learning story with Norton’s definitions of identity and imagined community, several interesting findings were derived and manifested.

Identity as How a Person Understands His or Her Relationship to the World

Through this trip, Jenny came to a deeper understanding that the “world” in which her relationship is structured is not the geographical world, but her imagined American community. Jenny has had a tight and long-term connection with this American

community since little. The input from her teachers and the overall learning environment provided Jenny a preliminary “English world.” She cultivated her interest in English learning and built up the habit of using the language for communication within this world. The cultural lessons from the teachers somehow unconsciously linked Jenny to American culture. Combing all the information together, she envisioned an imagined American community in her mind and her strong interest in English learning and American cultural understanding prepared her for the future participation of this community.

To put it another way, two worlds co-exist in Jenny’s learning process; her native world and the English world. Her relationship is deeply structured in her imagined American community as well as the Chinese community that she lives in. Her identity can be best understood in her imagined English world instead of being restricted to the geographical one, the Chinese world. Jenny's story is similar to the Japanese Rui's in Kanno's (2000) study. Rui's identity can be best understood in his imagined Japanese community that he identified himself with, instead of being confined in the American community that he has long lived in. Due to Rui's identification with his Japanese imagined community and identity, he tries to maintain his mother tongue. Both Jenny's and Rui's imagined communities, the English world and the Japanese society, respectively, greatly affect their dispositions toward their language learning or maintenance.

The Constantly Challenged and Revised Identity and Imagined Community

There is no doubt that Jenny had built up certain relation with her imagined American community; however, just as Norton’s definition of identity provided, both this relation and her identity as an English learner have been constantly challenged and revised during her English learning process. Long before taking off to the U.S., Jenny’s identification with the American community was strong but naïve. She tried hard to

master the language because she strongly believed that by doing so she can gain access to the participation of her imagined American community and even get her career there in the near future. However, this trip brought her a more mature perspective on her imagined American community. Though the time she spent in the U.S. was short, some challenges she encountered during the process did cause some revisions and redefinitions of her imagined American community and her identity as a language learner.

There were so many wonderful memories during the trip reinforcing her identification with the American community and strengthening her motives to become one member of the community. For example, she interpreted the American elderly ladies' "sweetheart" and "honey" as being given membership of the community. Though this might just be a gesture, for Jenny, such addresses gave her a sense of closer relationship with the American community. In addition, participating in such "American activity" as skating on ice outdoors also gave her a sense of the community. Other than that, during her time there, everything in the U.S. like the clean streets, the interesting stores, and the well-planned public construction that once flashed in the movies has become so real and so close to her. She felt herself a citizen of the U.S. and indeed she quite enjoyed the atmosphere there. All these happy moments encouraged her to try harder to gain access to the participation in her imagined American community and to develop an imagined identity as an insider of the community.

However, there were also some events challenging her identity and affecting her attitude toward her ideal imagined American community. For example, for the first two days, she was frustrated because the unfamiliar environment and people made her feel alienated. Her identity as a newcomer made her feel uncomfortable. What is more, when she lost her coat in the store, the impatient clerk aroused her anger because she directly associated the clerk's unfriendly attitude with her identity as a foreigner, namely, an outsider of the community, and therefore was unwilling to help. This "insult" made her

become skeptical of her previously-believed friendliness and kindness of her imagined Americans. And her sense of helplessness was obvious because “I am merely a foreigner, not as a group [being considered as one of their group members], and never an insider.” Her hard-work to gain access to her imagined American community for the first time encountered obstacles. This incident caused by the problem of identity struck her, and she started to wonder if the reality in the American community fits what she had long imagined before. A few days later, another event happened. The geometry teacher’s susceptible tone of “Can you do this?” irritated Jenny. She felt so “uncomfortable” that she linked this “unfair” treatment with her identity again. Her identity as a foreign language learner which presupposes her inability to speak and act just like her American peers in the classroom defeated her. The feeling of being regarded as a less capable individual and an outsider of the American community made her decide to keep silent to protest and guard her identity now that she was not appreciated by the geometry teachers. Those frustrating events challenged and revised Jenny’s naïve impression and image of her imagined American community. At the same time, her identity as a language learner has also been constantly redefined during the process. Generally, the results in the present study is consistent with Norton’s (2001) and Kinginger’s (2004) findings. Jenny, and the women in Norton’s (2001) and Kinginger’s (2004) studies alike all experienced the process of negotiating, constructing, revising and reconstructing a coherent and satisfying identity during their learning process in the L2 context. Unlike the previous studies whose participants mostly participated in a long-term SA program, this study provides an example of how a short-term SA participant had experienced the processes of identity revision and reconstruction.

Jenny's ambivalence when facing the “accent” incident also revealed the complexity of the identity issue. One day one schoolmate described Jenny's accent as being “cute”. Though “cute” may sound like a neutral word, for Jenny at that moment in

that context, it means different, or even “strange”; at least, it carries the meaning of “nonnative-like.” At the beginning, a sense of inferiority arose. She has been proud of her accent and speaking ability because both of them have been regarded as quite advanced compared with peers in her native country. When she felt herself being regarded as “strange” and “non-native-like,” she felt quite hurt although the general reader may not think the word “cute” carries that kind of negative meanings. From the perspective of world English, as long as her language is intelligible, a non-native speaker can preserve her accent to a certain extent. However, being put in the SA context, Jenny associated every language-related incidents to her identity. Her identity as a foreign language learner seemed to decree her failure of being a good English speaker and integrating into the American community. However, in the post-visit interview, her response to this comment was quite contradictory.

I don't know.... I want to sound native-like because that means my English is good. I want to keep them [the native-like characteristics of her accent]. But sometimes I want to pretend that my accent is not good, too. I want to keep the foreign characteristics of the accent so that others would know that I am a foreigner; then, maybe I can have some privileges (e.g., I can enjoy the food for free on the campus because I am a foreign student.) Keep the two, both native-like and some foreign characteristics, and then I can show it [my foreign characteristics] if needed.

Jenny on the one hand wanted to achieve high English proficiency with native-like accent, intonation, and fluency to get acceptance as an insider so as to achieve full-participation in the American community, but on the other she also desired not to lose the “nonnative-like” foreign characteristics of her spoken English because they may be the representation of her identity as a foreign language speaker. In other words, though she identified herself with her imagined American community, the identification with her

native country seemed no less important for her when she was in a foreign context. Gaining the identity as an American community participant and keeping her original identity as a member of Chinese community are both significant for her. Hence, besides being constantly challenged and revised, her identity was indeed multiple, which corresponds to Norton & Kamal's (2003) contention. In the follow-up interview, Jenny was unsure about why she "feels inferior from time to time" (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) in the SA context and she was also unclear about why she wanted to "keeping the foreign characteristics" (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) because that sounds contradictory to her goals of becoming a "proficient English user". However, it seems clear for the researcher that it is when being placed in the SA context, having the genuine interaction with the target language speakers, or even encountering conflicts that a learner can come to a deeper realization of herself and her multiple and constantly-revising identity as a language learner. Therefore, we may conclude that Jenny's identity as a language learner and her identification with the American community have been constantly challenged during the trip and her reaction to those events somewhat revealed her intention to not only gain access to the participation of her imagined community but guard her multiple identity.

To address the event in geometry class from another perspective, i.e., the relevancy of identities, Snow & McAdam (2000) provided that

identities can also vary in terms of their pervasiveness- that is, in terms of their situational reach or relevance. Some identities can be relevant in many contexts and situations, whereas other identities may be irrelevant to all but one or two situations. (p. 45)

Based on this perspective, Jenny's identity as a Taiwanese seemed less prominent during her English learning process in Taiwan. However, when she faced the conflict that was interpreted as related to her identity in the "foreign" context, this part of her identity

as a Taiwanese came to the fore, defeating her imagined affiliations with the American community. Due to the foregrounding of her identity as a Taiwanese, she resisted to cooperate with the geometry teacher in guarding the integrity of her identity. Again, it is through the real experience of conflicts in the SA context that Jenny realized how important a role identity plays in her language learning process.

Three months after this trip, Jenny re-identified herself as a learner who wants to keep her vernacular identity and master the language of English at the same time. In other word, she wanted to strike a balance between her imagined American community and her heritage community. She even gave up her future plan of going to the U.S. for a future career but made a decision of coming back to Taiwan to contribute herself to her native country. This change is significant because she revised her goals of English learning and her identity as a language learner because of the revision of her imagined American community.

Jenny's revisions of her learning goals and attitude are obvious after the trip. After seeing her inadequacy during the trip, Jenny become even more moderate a learner than before. She tried harder to practice her oral skills. She paid more attention to different accents because of the "cute accent" incident. She still desired for more opportunities of speaking English with native speakers. The goal of achieving "native-like proficiency" made Jenny work harder. However, her attitude toward English learning has become more mature. She no longer learnt English for integrating with the American community, but for the preparation of herself with enough ability to contribute to her own country. This "mission" of English learning reinforced Jenny's commitment toward her native country and her identity as a Chinese. Therefore, a conclusion can be drawn that there is a strong connection between language learning and identity. Jenny's motivation of language learning became profound because of her deeper realization of her identity during the SA trip,

From the discussion above, we can say that both her identity and goals for learning the language were challenged and hence changed owing to this SA experience. Although the time she spent in the foreign context was short, her opinions regarding her learning goals and herself as a language learner have undergone a major change. She restructured her relationship to the American community as well as to the whole world. This struggle of finding a balance point between her vernacular country and the English world coverage with Norton and Kamal's finding in 2003. Both Jenny and the Pakistan students in Norton and Kamal's study wanted to keep the two worlds, their vernacular world and the English world, co-exist. What is significant is that this trip redefined Jenny's relationship with her vernacular world. Without this short-term SA trip, reaching these realizations would nearly be impossible.

Identification with the Imagined Community

Jenny's identification with her imagined American community and its culture was the underlying impetus that encourages her investment in English learning. Researchers have discussed the interaction between identification, identity, and language acquisition. Wenger (1998) defined identification as "the process through which modes of belonging become constitutive of our identities by creating bonds or distinctions in which we become invested. Nationality for instance is a common source of identification" (p. 191). Ricento (2005) noted that identification with one culture is the impetus of learners' motivation to learn the language and become associate with it. Diamond (2011) also confirmed the significant role identification plays in learners' language acquisition and identity (re)formulation. Combined the discussion above, it is clear that identification, as a kind of belonging, has a great impact on language learner identity (re)construction. For Jenny, as an enthusiastic English learner, her identification with her imagined American

community can clearly be seen in her comment of the U.S. as a “refined, cultivated, free, and friendly country” before the trip. She dreamed of “walking on the streets of the U.S. and have a casual talk with an American” in the pre-visit interview. Obviously, Jenny affiliated certain association with her imagined American community and longed for her participation in it. Furthermore, her identification with the American culture was so strong that she would like to live the American lifestyle which was visualized by her foreign English teachers and the media. In order to achieve these goals, she had to work hard to become proficient in English so that she would have enough skills to gain the chance of going to her dreamed country which she have long identified herself with. Therefore, it is clear that such affiliations and identification with her imagined American community inspire Jenny’s investment in English learning. Just like Alice who persists in the learning of French in order to gain access to her imagined French community in Kinginger’s (2004) study, Jenny persists in English learning because she wanted to become a member of her imagined American community and she wanted to get a good return; that is, advanced English proficiency to give her access to the privileges of English native speakers. Therefore, such kind of investment in learning is also a kind of investment in her identity and all these efforts are driven by Jenny’s identification with her imagined American community.

Though Jenny has long been a faithful admirer of American culture since kindergarten, her identification with her imagined American community seemed to have undergone certain change after the SA trip. In the pre-visit interview, Jenny was so crazy about the American community that she wanted to go there for further study and hopefully find a future career there, living the American life. However, in the follow-up interview after the trip, Jenny revised part of her future goals. She gave up her dream of going to the U.S. for her life career; instead, if possible, she wished to get her college or graduate degree there and then come back to Taiwan to contribute herself to her native

country. In other words, rather than regarding America as a place for future life to gain a full participation in the American community, after the trip she looked upon the country as a model that she can learn something from. The trip brought her the realization that the place that she really wanted to devote to in her future is her native country, Taiwan. In the last interview, she expressed that English learning becomes a “mission” for her. However, her realization of “mission” is distinct from that discussed in the previous studies. Alice’s (Kinginger, 2004) mission of French learning guided her to achieve her professional goals. The Polish-Jewish participant in Hoffman’s research (1989) gradually changed her name, language use, and even cultural attitude and norms to become a totally new America. However, for Jenny, her mission of English learning is to equip herself with enough ability to make contributions to her native country. Hence, a conclusion may be drawn that through this study trip Jenny had the chance to reflect on her identification with her imagined community and her native country, leading to the strengthening of her commitment to her native country.

Jenny’s revision of her identification with the American community can be interpreted by using the two types of learners that Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000) dichotomized. She moved from those who “wish to develop new identities within the second language/culture” to those who “wish to exist only functionally within a language/society”. It can be found that after the trip, Jenny’s identification with America is restricted to developing her English proficiency to become a fluent and proficient English user, but not to become an “American.” She is no longer the type of learner whose only goal of English learning is to go abroad and reside in the foreign country. On the contrary, her identity becomes complex. She wants to not only develop her English proficiency but also keep her vernacular identity. That is to say, her English learning is on the premise of the maintenance of her identity as a Taiwanese citizen. Due to such realization, her learning objectives and career goals were revised accordingly. After the

trip, all her efforts of English learning are intended to provide her a world view and guide her move closer to contributing to her native country without losing her identity. Such realization and change is significant because such a different perspective on her identification with her imagined community and her identity as a language learner has caused some revision to her learning objectives and future goals.

Language Learning as Opportunities for the Future and the Construction of Future-self

Jenny's belief that English provides her with more opportunities for a bright future was further reinforced after this SA trip. This belief has served as the incentive to learn the language during Jenny's English learning process. Before this trip, she had learned from her father's example that a person with good English proficiency could find a more satisfying job; besides, his horizon could be broadened, and his possibilities were unlimited. Her teachers from foreign countries also presented Jenny a wonderful American community within which the people are refined, the culture interesting, the lifestyle free, and the attitude open. To participate in this community requires English proficiency. For Jenny, so muddled a young girl, English is like a "magic key" which could open a door, leading her to a wider world with more opportunities for the future. In other words, English learning can bring her a better future is what Jenny had long believed prior to the SA trip.

Learners taking language learning as opportunities for a better future are not rare in literature. For Alice, going to France provides her with an opportunity to escape from the hardship in her native country to a new context where "her social options are broadened"(Kinginger, 2004, p.219). For the Canadian immigrant women in Norton's (2001) study, English learning means a better life for children (for Martina) or an economical advantage (for Eva).With a similar belief of a better future with broaden

opportunities, Jenny landed on the U.S. Owing to this trip, Jenny had the chance to come into a close contact with the American community to experience the power of English in person. Though her trip lasted for only a short period of time, she felt "the door to another wider world open" (Follow-up interview, February, 2011) for her. Moreover, she realized that English proficiency provides her with the opportunity to survive both in her heritage community and in the American community. Hence, similar to Alice's experience in French, Jenny's short-term SA trip also strengthened her belief of language learning as "a key to more opportunities for the future"(Pre-SA interview, August, 2011). At the same time, her investment in English learning was reinforced as well. In all, Jenny's story abroad can be used to interpret study abroad as an occasion for personal growth in regards to seeing her own possibilities for the future.

That English provides a future with more opportunities leads to a related concept of "future-self," or "possible self." Possible selves, defined by McElwee & Dunning (2005), are "cognitive conceptions or images of the self in alternate, particularly future, states" (p.114). Because a learner's identity changes over time, during the learning process his dynamic and rich "expanded self-system" "contains information not just about one's current characteristics, but one's past and possible future selves, as well" (p. 114). Addressing from an alternative perspective, Norton (2000) sees identity as "a struggle for redefinition" (p.127). That is, a learner constantly redefines his identity and revises his relations to the society in his imagined future. During the process of language learning, a learner visualizes his future-self and such kind of future-self visualization reciprocally provides the impetus for language learning. Alice imagined her future-self as a dynamic, engaged teacher language educator (Kinginger, 2004). Therefore, her competence in French is "both a dream and a mission" (p.227). Similar to Alice's investment in her French identity, Jenny also included English as part of her identity, envisioning herself as "a capable English user who can communicate with members of the global community

without any language barrier." (Follow-up interview, February, 2012) Though she is so young that she may not have such a clear career path as Alice, through the data we already can find some clues of how important a role the conception of a future-self plays in her investment in English learning.

After the real immersion experience in the American community, Jenny's determination to attain a better future-self is strengthened. It is this strong sense of future-self visualization that provides her the essential impetus to learn English even more actively. Hence, she started doing more English learning activities because she feels the urgent need to equip herself with the skills and knowledge needed for future American community participation and ideal future-self attainment. Diamond (2011) presented an analogous finding that his American participants who took Korean lessons all include Korean as an important component of their identities in their future selves. It is also the envisioning of a new future-self that provides his Korean learners the impetus to learn that language. Similar story can also be found in Norton & Kamal's (2003) study. Their Pakistan students imagined their future-selves as participants of the global community whose English is skillful and technological knowledge advanced.

For all of the participants in different studies, language learning represents a tool for imagining a better future self. The present study confirms the future-self conception, extending its application to short-term SA learners. For Jenny, the image of her future-self as a capable English user had played a role during her English learning process. However, it is this short-term SA trip that brought her the reinforcement and revision of her future-self, leading to her greater investment in English learning. This study also demonstrates how powerful the effects of a SA trip can have on language learners in spite of its short-term nature. Drawing on all the studies mentioned above, a conclusion may be made that though learner identity undergoes constant revision and redefinition during the learning process, the future-self conception have a direct and reciprocal impact on the

(re)construction of identity. Taking a SA trip, no matter it is a long or short one, can provide a chance of redefinition of one's future-self.

Language Learner's Resistance or Non-participation in Study Abroad Context

Language learners' resistance in second or foreign language classrooms reflects their struggle to guard the integrity of their imagined community and identity. Learners' resistance has a lot of forms. In Giltrow and Calhoun's (1992) study, most of their Guatemalan students had "retired from the ESL classroom, either by physically removing themselves and no longer attending regularly, or by adopting an aloof, unengaged way of attending" (p.63). Similarly, the Japanese ESL learners in Mortita's (2004) study chose to non-participate the class with different forms such as a withdrawal or the alternate form of engagement with the class. They did so for a variety of reasons, among which were "identity as a less competent member, outsider or marginal status, role as a relative newcomer, role as someone with limited English imposed by others, and instructor's pedagogical style" (p.586-587). All these studies above depicted the difficulties that second or foreign language learners may encounter in the foreign context. They all struggled to guard their identity by using different forms of resistance.

The extreme form of resistance is what Wenger called "non-participation". Two typical instances of non-participation are described in Norton's study (2000). Two ESL learners, Katarina and Felicia, in Canada escaped from the language classrooms and decided to non-participate in their language courses because their identities and imagined communities were not acknowledged by their teachers. They chose to non-participate the class to guard their identity and imagined community.

For the present study, though Jenny spent only a short period of time in the classes in the U.S., her resistance to the geometry class somewhat revealed her intention of

keeping her identity and imagined community intact in the foreign context. During the trip, Jenny gained some access to her imagined community and seized chances of language practice through the participation of practices such as the school classes, the after-school sport games, and the host family activities. However, when she felt her identity not acknowledged by the geometry teacher, she resisted to cooperate in class and chose not to have interaction with the teacher to protest. Although this trip was too short to afford a long-term observation of Jenny's interaction with the geometry teacher, from this small instance we can still find that Jenny, just like all the SA learners mentioned above, struggled for the integrality of her imagined American community and the integrality of her identity through the choices of participation and non-participation in activities. The process of negotiating her roles and identities in the SA context is worthy of language educators' attention.

The Reality Check in Study Abroad Context

During the process of identity (re)construction in the short-term SA trip some functions, such as reality check, have also been fulfilled. Since this trip brought Jenny the genuine interaction with the members of the American community and a close look at its culture, she could compare what she really experienced there with what were depicted in her imagined community. The reality is that just like all the other communities, there are some positive parts in the American society; while at the same time, the dark sides do exist as well. She learned that the American society is not as perfect as she had imagined prior to the trip. For example, not all Americans are kind and friendly. There were still some indifferent clerks and passer-bys. There were some so-called "bad students" who smoked or wore strange clothing on American high school campus. She came to the realization that the perfect American community only exists in her wild imagination. After experiencing the cultural shocks, Jenny learned that different habits originating

from cultural differences require mutual understanding and respect. For example, Jenny was amazed at Americans' eating and showering habits and their attitudes towards child nurturing and sex. These all displayed the differences between American and Chinese culture. Mutual respect should be paid to reach harmony. All those realizations were not reached until she participated in the trip to have the genuine observation and interaction on her own. Moreover, after the trip she can participate in the American community from her real experience instead of an imagined fantasy. Also, her relationship to the American community is no longer structured by others' stories or hear-say, but through her real experiences of every conflicting and astonishing moment, leading to the deeper understanding of its culture. Jenny's story in some way may represent a best-case scenario for short-term study trip in that it provides a great opportunity for reality check and the reconstruction of a learner's identity and relationship to his imagined community.

Significant Others during her Learning Process

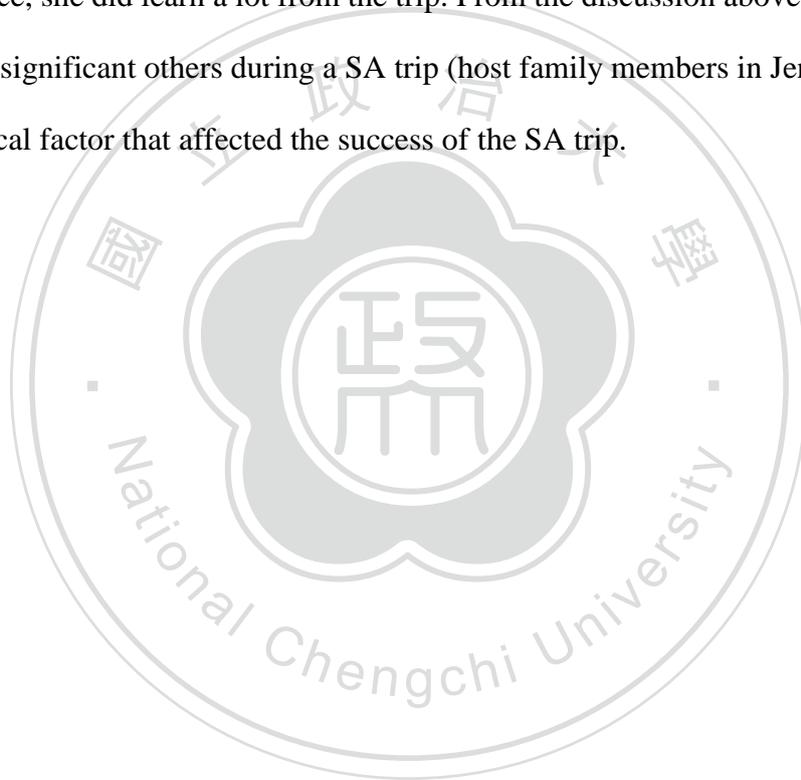
Jenny's story of English learning also demonstrated how the significant others can affect language learners' imagined communities, identities, and therefore their learning trajectories. During Jenny's English learning process, her parents have played a crucial role in that they successfully create an imagined community for Jenny and positively prepare her for the future participation of that imagined community. Jenny's mother serves as a resource provider who always perceives different language learning opportunities for her; while her father supplies the image of a successful language learner who can inspire and encourage Jenny to always keep going no matter what difficulties or frustrations she might have. In addition, her parents' providing of good language learning environments inspires Jenny to invest in English learning and strengthens Jenny's aspiration toward that imagined community. The community they imagined for Jenny to

participate in the future is a boundless global community in which English is used as a tool for communication. Their effort is like the immigrant parents' in Dagenais (2003). They chose French Immersion education for their children to ensure that their children could develop the ability of future participation in a Canadian French-English bilingual community. Jenny's parents' choice of bilingual kindergarten is to prepare her for the future participation in the American community as well as her heritage language community. Hence, we may conclude that Jenny's parents, though not extremely dominating, do exert great influence on her imagined American community formation and her language learner identity construction.

Though Jenny's parents created an imagined community for her, what most significantly made this imagination real and the community accessible are her foreign English teachers. Jenny's foreign English teachers represent the prototype of her imagined Americans: nice, friendly, open-minded, passionate, cultured, and well-mannered. She naturally associated this image with the members of her imagined American community as a whole. In addition to the image of the people of the U.S., the teachers' cultural sharing motivated Jenny to affiliate her identification with the American culture. Jenny has cultivated an imagined fantasy of the American community, building up certain link with it, and therefore further constructed her identity as a language learner. Hence, the influence that her English teachers have on Jenny is significant. Norton and Kamal (2003) and Kanno (2003) also pointed out the great influence of educational institutions on language learners' imagined communities by investigating students in Pakistani schools and Japanese schools respectively. Jenny's imagined community, like the students in Norton and Kamal's (2003) and Kanno's (2003) studies, is greatly affected by her foreign English teachers.

During the SA trip, host family members' company and guidance were significant for Jenny. Because of her host mother's help, Jenny has learnt the cultural norms and has

experienced the American lifestyles during the trip. Her social connections with the American community were built through her host mother's guidance, further leading to her rich experiences in home-stay. Her mother's role was doubtlessly significant in shaping Jenny's life in the U.S. At school, Jenny's host sister served as the mediation of Jenny and the American community. She involved Jenny in her social circles and provided her with linguistic aids. With her support, Jenny's experiences at school, which was an important part of this study trip, were rich and colorful. With the two significant others' assistance, she did learn a lot from the trip. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that significant others during a SA trip (host family members in Jenny's story) can be the critical factor that affected the success of the SA trip.



CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

The present study explores how short-term SA experience can affect Jenny's English learning trajectory and the identity (re)construction. In the previous chapters, by inquiring into Jenny's experiences before, during, and after the short-term SA trip to the U.S., the potential challenges, the possible imagined community (re)formulation and identity (re)construction this trip brought are explored. This chapter starts with a summary of the study. Next, pedagogical implications of the study and suggestions for further research are proposed respectively. Finally, a conclusion follows.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the short-term SA experience can affect the learning trajectory and the identity (re)construction of a Taiwanese junior high school student called Jenny. The study focused on Jenny's English learning history as a process of (re)construction of her learner identity, directing special attention on the influence of her short-term SA trip to the U.S. Her English learning experiences were explored longitudinally by categorizing them into three main phases: the pre-SA experience, the during-SA experience, and finally the three-month-later post-SA experience. Qualitative approaches using interviews, participant diaries, and documentation were adopted to investigate the potential challenges and identity change that this short-term study trip brought to Jenny.

The results of the study revealed that Jenny encountered a great deal of challenges

in the SA context and during the process her identity was constantly challenged and revised during the trip. After her hard struggles of building up relations with her host family members, interacting with the teachers as well as peers in the school context, and resolving the conflicts with the native speakers, a deeper realization of the SA experience was achieved, leading to the redefinition and reorientation of Jenny's identity, her imagined American community, and herself as an English learner. In other words, Jenny's perspectives toward her identity and her imagined American community became more mature: she moved from a blind worshiper of American culture who regarded everything related to America good and desired to become Americanized to one who could distinguish what she needed and what she could learn from American culture. In addition to the revision of her identity as an foreign language learner, Jenny's commitment toward her native country was strengthened after the trip because when being put in the foreign context, facing the conflicting culture and lifestyles, she had the chance of reflecting on her own attitude toward her native country and language. In all, though Jenny's SA experience was so short that it only lasted for 12 days, we already can find some similar changes or growths such as the different aspects of challenges and reactions in different contexts, the constantly challenged identities and imagined communities, the revised identification with the target culture, the resistance of classes to guard identity, and the future-self conception that happened to the long-term SA learners in the previous studies. Therefore, this study contributes to our knowledge of identity and imagined community in the short-term SA context, verifying that similar findings of long-term SA experience can be achieved within the short-term period.

Pedagogical Implications

The present study contributes to the understanding of the two concepts: identity and imagined community in SLA, especially how to apply them in SA context. The findings

of the present study confirm the previous evidence (Norton, 2001; Kinginger, 2004) of the constantly challenged and redefined nature of learner identity. It further extends the application of this characteristic to the short-term SA learners. This can be used to improve our understanding of a language learner's imagined community (re)formation and identity (re)construction within such a short-term period in the foreign context. Similar to Giltrow and Calhoun's (1992), Morita's (1992), and Norton's (2000) findings, Jenny's story provides an additional instance of learners' resistance, or non-participation, of certain practices to guard the integrity of the imagined community and identity in the foreign context.

Now that imagined community and identity play such crucial roles in learners' learning process, language teachers in classrooms should not neglect their implicit influence and need to make good use of them to encourage learners' investment in English learning. For example, the introduction of the target culture can fire students' imagination of the target language community. Discussing some controversial or critical issues related to cultures, races, or countries can be used to arouse students' awareness of identity and imagined community.

A related issue concerns learners' imagined community and future-self conception. Learners' imagined community and future-self conception provides them impetus to invest in language learning (Kinger, 2004). That is, by imagining a romantic American community and herself as a proficient English user, Jenny invests in her English learning to achieve the satisfaction of the future-self. Again, since the future-self has a powerful impact on learners' investment, language educators can try to incorporate the construction of imagined community and future-self in the language courses to motivate learners to be active learners. Helping them setting their learning goals may be the first step.

In addition to the reconstruction of Jenny's imagined community and identity, this study presents Jenny's strengthened commitment to her native country after the SA

experience. SA experience provides a good chance for learners' immersion in the target language environment and the target culture. Through the immersion in another culture and the interaction with people in the SA context, learners come to the fuller realization of the role their vernacular identities play in their lives. It is also through the cultural clash that learners' national identities becomes salient and reinforce their learner commitment to their countries. Hence, SA not only provides a chance of language practice and cultural understanding, but also a chance for reflecting one's identity.

Besides, during the trip Jenny encountered many difficulties when building relations with host-family members and interacting with target language speakers. Possible help can be provided by language educators and program organizers prior to the trip to make the trip less challenging and more fruitful. First, in order to improve the home-stay environment, SA program organizers can set up standards of qualified home-stays and help SA learners find appropriate ones that meet their needs. Drawing on Jenny's experience, it is of great help if host family members are willing to understand and aid SA learner's efforts of language practice. Also, during the 12-day trip Jenny's host sister accompanied Jenny and served as a connection of Jenny's school experience and home-stay experience. As a result, for the selection of suitable home-stays, one suggestion could be that home-stays with at least one kid of similar age to SA learner can serve as the mediation between her home-stay experiences and school experiences. As for SA participants, mentally-preparing them to cope with life in home-stays beforehand is necessary. The program administrator may provide learners cultural lessons to raise their (inter)cultural awareness. Inviting anyone that have taken a SA trip before to share their experiences and feelings with the students that plan to go on one may help, too. Second, suggestions for how to increase the linguistic input and opportunities for language practice in home-stay environment should be provided by language educators. Preparing guidelines of topics for discussion or activities to do together can help initiate interactions

between home-stay members and the SA learners. Finally, teaching SA participants the cultural norms and lessons of manners to develop good relationship and keep good interaction with target language speakers may be of great help, too. Good supporting system should also be incorporated to help SA learners face and resolve conflicts if they indeed happen.

Finally, diaries (with events and personal responses) not only provided Jenny a chance to record her experiences in the abroad context but also served as a significant tool of her later reflection of the trip. Many original feelings and reactions to events that happened could be retrieved from the first-hand data. Through keeping diaries, SA participants could become more aware of their experiences during the trip so that more awareness of the process of their language learning and the (re)construction of their identity as a language learner may be reached. That way, the trip can be more fruitful and beneficial for personal growth. Hence, inviting SA participants to keep diaries is highly recommendable.

Limitations of the Study

This study has demonstrated that understanding language learners' challenges and identity change in the SA context is needed and should be stressed in SLA. However, it does have some limitations. First, this case study only reveals one particular SA learner's challenges and identity change. It will be possible to get different findings to achieve more comprehensive conclusions if more participants are observed. Moreover, the study is bounded and situated in the short-term study trip setting; therefore, the reader needs to make decisions about its transferability for other settings. Finally, though triangulation of interviews, diary, and documentation has been made in the present study, if more resources of data such as observation can be incorporated, a more comprehensive conclusion can be drawn.

Suggestions for Future Research

Further research is needed to investigate what SA experience may bring to language learners and how it may cause language learners' identity (re)construction. First, learners with an alternative background or different degrees of investment in language learning can be studied to see if similar (re)construction of identity will happen. Second, participants from a different culture be investigated to see if what kind of role learners' background play in shaping language learners' SA experience. Finally, the concepts of imagined community and identity are so important that the studies should not be restricted in SA context only. Investigation of how the two concepts influence learners' learning in local language classrooms is also advisable.

Conclusion

SA has become a popular choice for learners' second or foreign language learning because of the general understanding that it can bring learners real interaction with the target language speakers and the genuine use of the language. However, the challenges and difficulties that SA learners have to face in the foreign context are huge and of various kinds. During the process, their identities as language learners are often challenged and redefined. Through reading the participant's story, an insider's view of the SA experience is provided. By investigating the themes related to language learning and identity construction, this study has made suggestions of possible help language educators can provide is made to make the SA more meaningful and fruitful for language learners. The author's wish is that SA will all have fruitful rewards from this experience abroad.

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Appendix A: Questions for the Pre-SA Interview

1. When did you start learning English? How was the experience like?
2. How did your English teachers teach you? How did you like their teaching methods?
3. What English activities did you like and dislike?
4. Besides English classes, what opportunities have you had in using English with other people such as family members or friends?
5. How do you like English learning?
6. What significant events are there that make you like/dislike English?
7. What role and significance does English have in your life?
8. Did you have any difficulties using English? What are these difficulties?
9. How would you describe yourself as an English learner ?
10. What do you think American people are like? Why do you have that impression?
11. What do you think American cultures are like? Why do you have that impression?
12. Since you have never gone abroad yet, which countries do you want to visit most? Why?
13. Why do you want to take part in this short-term visit?
14. What aspects of the short-term visit are you most excited about?
15. What are the important goals that you want to achieve during the visit abroad?
16. Do you have any worries for this short-term visit?
17. How do you prepare for the visit?

Appendix B: Questions for the Post-SA Interview

1. Please describe what happened during the 12 days. I am interested in everything that you want to tell me. (Open-ended question)
2. How did you feel about the classes you attended in the U.S.? What are the differences between classes in the U.S. and those in Taiwan?
3. What activities did you enjoy during the study trip? How could these activities enhance your English proficiency?
4. How do you look at the role that English plays in the global village?
5. How do you view the task of English learning?
6. What were the difficulties that you faced during your trip in the U.S.?
7. When you frustrated, what did you do or who did you ask for help?
8. What would you describe yourself as an English learner now?
9. How did you interact with the members of your host family?
10. How would you describe the members of your host family or other Americans you encountered during the trip?
11. After the trip, how did you find Americans different from the images you had before?
12. How did you feel about the afternoon cultural lessons or cultural trips?
13. During the trip, what part of the culture differences impressed you most?
14. How did you like the American culture now?
15. Did you feel homesick? How did you keep in contact with your family or friends in Taiwan? How often did you contact them?
16. During the short-term exchange trip in the U.S., what events impressed you most? And why?
17. What events that make you feel uncomfortable/ embarrassed/ annoyed?
18. How would you describe your short-term exchange trip as a whole?

Appendix C: Questions for the Follow-up Interview

1. Please describe what happened between the trip and now. What have happened?
What have changed?
2. How do you like the classes you attended in the U.S. and in Taiwan?
3. After the trip, what are the new English learning methods or strategies that you adopt?
4. What are the new leaning activities that you include in your English learning after the short-term trip?
5. How do you like the task of English learning? What makes you have this feeling?
6. How did the study trip affect your attitude toward English learning?
7. What difficulties do you find in English learning?
8. How would you describe yourself as an English learner now?
9. After the trip, what are the changes of your impressions toward Americans?
10. How do you like the American culture now? How is it different from Chinese culture?
11. Last time you mentioned that some events made you unhappy/ frustrated/ annoyed/ surprised, how do you feel about those events now?
12. Generally speaking, how do you evaluate your short-term study trip to the U.S.?