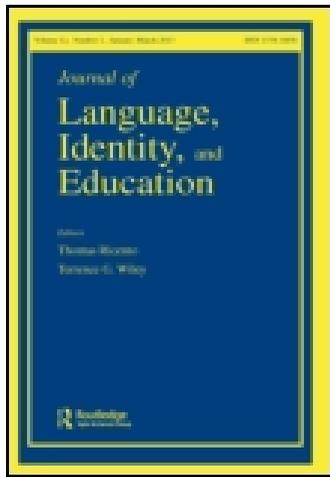


This article was downloaded by: [Peking University]

On: 06 September 2015, At: 04:29

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London, SW1P 1WG



Journal of Language, Identity & Education

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/hlie20>

EFL Learning and Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study in 5 Universities in China

Yihong Gao^a, Zengyan Jia^b & Yan Zhou^c

^a Peking University

^b Beijing Union University

^c Beijing Foreign Studies University

Published online: 15 Jul 2015.



CrossMark

[Click for updates](#)

To cite this article: Yihong Gao, Zengyan Jia & Yan Zhou (2015) EFL Learning and Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study in 5 Universities in China, *Journal of Language, Identity & Education*, 14:3, 137-158, DOI: [10.1080/15348458.2015.1041338](https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2015.1041338)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2015.1041338>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms &

Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

ARTICLES

EFL Learning and Identity Development: A Longitudinal Study in 5 Universities in China

Yihong Gao

Peking University

Zengyan Jia

Beijing Union University

Yan Zhou

Beijing Foreign Studies University

Combining psychological and social perspectives and using mixed methods, this 4-year longitudinal study examined the EFL learning and self-identity development of about 1,000 students from 5 universities in Beijing, China. The self-designed questionnaire, administered 5 times during the 4 years, consisted of 7 identity categories of identity changes: *positive self-confidence*, *negative self-confidence*, *subtractive*, *additive*, *productive*, *split*, and *zero change*. This was coupled with qualitative data including semester interviews, learning diaries, and class observations. Results revealed that *positive self-confidence change* was the most prominent throughout the 4 years; *subtractive change* started low but underwent steady increase; *additive*, *productive*, and *split changes* underwent marked increase in the fourth year. Specific meanings of these changes varied at different stages and for different learners; relations of the changes displayed complexities and ambivalence. The findings indicate that L2 identity development in EFL settings in the context of globalization deserves broader research attention.

Key words: English learning, identity development, longitudinal study

“Identity” has become a captivating issue in second/foreign language (L2) research only in the recent 2 decades but has long been a basic issue in actual learning—that is, who the learner is when starting to learn the L2, during the process of learning, and when using the L2 and who

Correspondence should be sent to Yihong Gao, Institute of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics, School of Foreign Languages, Peking University, Beijing 100871, China. E-mail: gaoyh@pku.edu.cn

he or she will become with the development of L2 competence. Though the exact terms used vary – L2 *self*, *ego*, *self-identity*, or *social identity*, and the focus shifts.

PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES OF L2 IDENTITY

Research on L2 (second or foreign language) learners' identity can be largely sorted into 2 schools, the psychological and the social. The psychological school approaches the identity issue within a social psychological paradigm, focusing on stable individual learner characteristics regarding language attitude, learning motivation, and linguistic and nonlinguistic outcome of learning. This includes classical studies such as Gardner and Lambert (1972) on *instrumental* and *integrative motivation*; Lambert (1974) on *subtractive* and *additive bilingualism*; Guiora (1972) on *L2 ego*; Clarke (1976) on *L2 acquisition as a clash of consciousness*; Schumann (1978) on *acculturation*; a number of categorizations regarding acculturation stages—excitement and euphoria, culture shock, gradual recovery, and full recovery (e.g., Brown, 1986; Oberg, 1960; Smalley, 1963); and contemporary studies, such as Dörnyei (2005), on *L2 Motivational Self System*. While classical studies mostly highlight the relation between successful L2 learning and learners' identification with the target language group, contemporary studies regard “integrativeness” as marginally relevant and explore an ideal “global language identity” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 98) or L2 self within an imagined global community (Ryan, 2006). Despite differences, studies of the psychological school look for stable patterns of the individual mind and its development. They rely primarily on quantitative methods such as questionnaire and controlled experiment, though recent studies start to broaden their methodological scope and increasingly adopt mixed methods (e.g., Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2009).

The social school believes that language activities should be understood in their social context. This school can be further divided into the social structuralist and the poststructuralist groups. For the structuralist group, identity is externally defined; social structural factors such as ethnicity, class, and age are determining factors of user/learners' language identities. Consequently, they look for correspondence between structural factors and language (identity) factors. The post-structuralists criticize structuralist perspectives, psychological or social, as being “essentialist” and too rigid. They view L2 identity as multiple, dynamic, and ambivalent. Those who hold a social constructivist view also recognize the interaction between individual agents and their environment and scrutinize how language learning could be a site of struggle for different identities. Many draw on sociologist Bourdieu's (1986) concept of *capital* to interpret learners' *investment* in L2 and related identity conflicts. Representative works include those of Norton (Norton, 2001; Norton Peirce, 1995), Pavlenko (2003), and Pennycook (2007). These studies favor qualitative research methods such as interviews and discourse analysis.

L2 IDENTITY IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CONTEXTS

Many influential theoretical models and concepts of L2 identity are based in narrowly defined “second language” (SL) contexts, most typically adult or adolescent immigrant contexts in North America (e.g., Schumann, 1978; Norton Peirce, 1995). The focus is on the extent to which learners are acculturated into the target culture community, or the extent to and the manner in which

they embrace the new status. Also belonging to the SL context category are studies of going-abroad experience (e.g., Gao, 2011), in which conflicting themes of enhanced national identity and reflection on ethnocentrism are brought about.

In comparison, “foreign language” (FL) context has received less, though still fruitful, attention. Dörnyei’s *L2 Motivational Self System* has gained empirical support from EFL contexts such as Japan, China, and Iran (Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009). Based on L2 writing research, Kramsch (2000) proposes the concept of *textual identity*, a sense of self that L2 learners may develop through L2 writing. Following a Peircean semiotic approach, Kramsch thinks the use of L2 could be symbolic and “enacting the arbitrary conventions of the code and its socially conventionalized uses” (p. 136). Similarly but from a psychological perspective largely in line with Guiora (1972), Wang (2004) proposes *English pronunciation self-concept* with empirical basis on Chinese EFL students. He finds that EFL pronunciation is a crucial aspect of learners’ self-concept and that its performance will influence self-judgment of L2 learning ability in general.

Connecting to the social psychological tradition but using a qualitative method, Gao (2001, 2002) studied a group of participants commonly regarded as the “best foreign language learners” in China. Drawing on Erich Fromm’s (1948) *productive orientation* in data interpretation, she proposes *productive bilingualism* in contrast with subtractive bilingualism and additive bilingualism (Lambert, 1974). In productive bilingualism, the proficiency of the target language and culture and that of the native language and culture enhance each other. The learner experiences cognitive, affective, and creativity growth, achieving a “1+1 > 2” outcome. Later Gao and associates expanded this research and found productive self-identity changes related to EFL learning among Chinese university students (Gao et al, 2004; Li et al., 2007). Focusing on learner discourse, Hong Kong-based scholar Gu (2009) portrays Chinese EFL learners’ motivation and identity construction in their learning community, the surrounding social environment, and an imagined global community.

On the whole, identity studies in FL contexts are relatively few compared to those in SL contexts; longitudinal studies are especially rare. There is a common belief that FL contexts could not offer ample target cultural exposure needed for identity change. In critique of Gao and associates’ study, Qu (2005) questions the relevance of L2 identity in China’s EFL context. He thinks genuine intercultural communication is lacking and that most students learn English only for instrumental purposes. Similarly, in an extensive review of L2 identity research, Block (2007) states, “My conclusion is that the prospects of TL-mediated subject positions in the FL context are minimal to non-existent” (p. 137).

The present researchers believe it is necessary and feasible to combine social psychological and social constructivist perspectives in tracking EFL learners’ L2 identity development, which involves interaction between individuals and their environment. First, the trajectory of the learner, or “the self, as reflexively understood by the individual in terms of his or her biography” (Giddens, 1991, p. 244), is bound to have some continuity and development patterns. Second, EFL learning for Chinese students is also an indispensable part of their social environment. In a nation where the cultural tradition is deeply rooted and the social institutional forces are strong, structural influence is not to be excluded while examining individual agency and variation. Third, previous research has indicated that in the context of globalization, increased linguistic and cultural *mobility* (Blommaert, 2010) or *flow* (Pennycook, 2007) has created new sociolinguistic landscapes. L2 identity development is potentially related to the increase of various forms of capital and not limited to integration with the native target language group. Particular features of such

capital investment remain to be examined. We also believe that mixed research methods will best serve this purpose. While qualitative methods allow for detailed description of individual learning process and meanings, quantitative methods provide consistent tools to track general patterns.

Our research team combined psychological and social perspectives and adopted mixed research methods to trace EFL learning motivation and identity development of Chinese students during their university undergraduate years. The present article focuses on identity development. The research question was: During the four years of undergraduate English learning, what kind of identity changes, if any, did the students experience?

METHODOLOGY

Participants were undergraduate students from 5 different types of universities in Beijing. These students came from various parts of China; the overwhelming majority entered university at age 18 and graduated at age 22, and their L1 was Chinese (dialects). [Tables 1](#) and [2](#) offer more detailed participant information (Based on questionnaire participation).

Data Collection

Mixed methods were employed, including a self-designed questionnaire in Chinese for all participants, student journals in English, and interviews in Chinese with some participants.

Questionnaire. Based on Gao et al. (2004, 2007), the questionnaire included a section regarding identity development (translation in Appendix) and another section of EFL learning motivation, all in the form of 5-point Likert Scale. [Table 3](#) shows the variable labels for identity changes, their meanings, and corresponding item numbers.

The same questionnaire was administered to the participants 5 times over the 4 years, with Test 1 upon entering university followed by Tests 2, 3, 4, and 5 given at the ends of academic years (for test reliability, see [Table 5](#)).

Student journals. At university entrance, 1 class from each of the 5 universities was invited to write English journals on a voluntary basis. Over the 4 years, students were given 17 broad

TABLE 1
Distribution of Participants

University Type	Student Major	Number of Participants				
		Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
UA: Foreign-language university	English	235	231	208	207	164
UB: Comprehensive university	English	49	48	50	44	51
UC: Key university of natural sciences	Natural sciences	199	186	181	176	173
UD: University of natural sciences	Natural sciences	457	358	344	354	337
UE: Social science/liberal arts university with a focus on foreign affairs	Social sciences & liberal arts	378	322	336	181	253
Total		1318	1145	1119	962	978

TABLE 2
Participants' Demographic Features¹

University	Gender (%) M/F	Family Background (%) City/Town/Village	English Proficiency (%) < CET-4/CET-4/CET-6 or TEM-4/TEM-8 ²				
			Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Test 5
UA	16/84	51/38/11	67/17/16/0	38/26/35/1	2/7/91/0	0/0/97/3	0/9/2/89
UB	22/78	42/47/11	84/10/6/0	23/64/13/0	0/4/96/0	0/5/93/2	0/2/4/94
UC	77/23	57/22/21	99/1/0/0	97/2/0/0	62/38/0/0	28/45/26/1	14/45/40/1
UD	60/39	48/24/28	100/0/0/0	100/0/0/0	100/0/0/0	47/28/25/0	29/24/46/1
UE	65/34	40/49/11	93/7/0/0	75/22/3/0	1/45/53/1	1/8/88/3	0/6/73/21
Total	55/45	48/34/18	92/5/3/0	78/14/8/0	42/21/37/0	22/20/56/2	12/19/43/26

TABLE 3
Variables of Identity Changes

Variable	Meaning	Item number
Self-confidence (Positive)	Perceived increase in one's own competence	41, 45, 48, 50, 52
Self-confidence (Negative)	Perceived decrease of one's own competence	31, 36, 38, 42, 56
Subtractive	L1 and C1 identity replaced by L2 and C2 identity	43, 44, 54, 57, 63
Additive	Coexistence of L1 and L2, and of C1 and C2 behavior patterns and values, each specified for particular contexts	32, 47, 51, 60, 61
Productive	Competence in L1/C1 and L2/C2 positively reinforce each other	35, 37, 39, 55, 58
Split	Struggle between L1/C1 and L2/C2 gives rise to identity conflict	34, 40, 49, 53, 64
Zero	Absence of identity change	33, 46, 59, 62, 65

journal topics on English learning, life experiences, and attitudes that were related to or that entailed EFL learning motivation and identity development (Table 4). Within these topics students chose their own focus; their journals received written feedback but not grades from their English instructors.

Interviews and supplementary data. Altogether 58 students from those journal-writing classes voluntarily participated in individual interviews. For each participant, a series of 8 interviews were conducted in Chinese, one at the end of each semester on the following major themes: EFL learning experiences over the semester, feelings about the English learning process, attitudes towards English and English learning, future expectations regarding English learning and

¹Small proportions of missing numbers are not included in the table.

²CET-4/6 (College English Test-Band 4/6) and TEM-4/8 (Test for English Major, Band 4/8) are national exams of English proficiency in the People's Republic of China, respectively, for non-English and English majors in university. CET-4 is intermediate level, CET-6 and TEM-4 are upper-intermediate, and TEM-8 is advanced. According to Guidelines for the Teaching of College English issued by China's Ministry of Education (2000), all university students were required to sit CET-4; many universities required students to pass CET-4 before graduation. From 2005 onwards, the requirement eased and in many universities band tests were no longer necessary for graduation. Yet the tests remained influential.

TABLE 4
Journal Topics

<i>Semester/Year</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Topic</i>
S1/Y1	J1	Motives and future expectation for English learning
	J2	Comparison between English learning in high school and university
	J3	Achievement and frustration in English learning
S2/Y1	J4	The adoption and use of English names
	J5	English test scores and self-confidence
	J6	Experiences with and opinions on English songs and movies
S1/Y2	J7	Communication with foreigners
	J8	Choice of English accents
	J9	Experience with and opinions on the celebration of Christmas
S2/Y2	J10	English learning experiences after class
	J11	Feelings about taking external standardized English tests
	J12	Metaphors for English and English learning
S1/Y3	J13	Comment on the English learning campaign
	J14	Comparison of English learning between now and the past 2 years
S2/Y3	J15	Feelings about the importance of English in one's own life
S1/Y4	J16	The most impressive (inter)national event
S2/Y4	J17a	The influence of global financial crisis on one's own life and future
	J17b	Different choices of university life, if there were another chance
	J17c	Retrospective thoughts and feelings about university life and English learning

TABLE 5
Cronbach Alpha of the Questionnaire

	<i>Test 1</i>	<i>Test 2</i>	<i>Test 3</i>	<i>Test 4</i>	<i>Test 5</i>
Entire Questionnaire	0.769	0.813	0.850	0.854	0.877
Identity Changes	0.662	0.725	0.788	0.780	0.840

use, experiences with and attitudes towards recent cultural activities and events, sense of self as related to English learning, and difference of the above aspects, as compared with previous periods.

An extra interview was conducted on those individual interviewees who served as volunteers in Year 3 when Olympic Games were held in Beijing, focusing on their experiences in the event. In addition, three sets of focus group interviews were conducted during Year 3 and Year 4 to make up for the reduced number of student journals, with themes similar to those for individual interviews. Classroom observations were conducted and Internet postings were collected as supplementary data.

Procedure

All students were invited to participate in the study upon their university entrance on a voluntary basis, and they were informed to be free to withdraw during the study. With a few exceptions, most students accepted the invitation willingly and stayed through the project. The first 3 waves

of questionnaire data were collected at the end of their English (Intensive Reading) class. As there were few compulsory English courses in Year 3 and Year 4, the last 2 waves of questionnaire data were collected in various ways, some in class and some in small groups. For the student journals, the topics were given to the students in class by their (Intensive Reading) English instructors, who were also members of the research team, in Years 1 and 2. The instructors read the journals and provided written feedback but gave no grades. In Years 3 and 4 the journals were collected and responded to by the same (previous) instructors after class, mostly through email. Individual interviews, Internet data collection, and most of the observations were carried out independently by graduate students who were also research team members, mostly on campus. Efforts were made to protect student privacy from their English instructors. In a few instances, observations were carried out by instructors/researchers—for example, in Olympic Games volunteer training when an instructor and students were peer trainees. The focus group interviews in Years 3 and 4 were conducted jointly by previous English instructors/researchers and by student interviewers.

Data Analysis

For the questionnaire data, descriptive analysis of each identity change category in each test was carried out. One-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the scores of each identity change category across different tests. For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted to sort out categories of identity development through time. The themes were based on categories in the questionnaire, but attention was paid to let the data speak and allow new themes to emerge. Data of different sources were compared and integrated. Research team members from the 5 universities analyzed data of their own respective sites, based on which the following overall analysis was made.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General Patterns of Development

General patterns of identity changes and their development over the 4 years, as found through the questionnaire data, can be seen from [Figure 1](#) and from [Table 6](#). First, in terms of general ranking, *self-confidence changes*, particularly positive changes, were the most prominent among all. The development path of *negative self-confidence* mirrored that of *positive self-confidence*. *Zero change* was also quite high, positioned in the middle of *positive* and *negative confidence*. Among the cultural types of identity changes, the two “positive” kinds, *additive* and *productive*, ranked high, while the two “negative” ones, *subtractive* and *split*, ranked low.

Second, except for *zero change*, all types of identity change underwent significant increase or decrease over the 4 years, though not in a drastic manner. There were 2 turning points in Year 1 and Year 4. At the end of Year 1, there was a marked drop of *positive self-confidence* and a corresponding increase in *negative self-confidence*. At the end of Year 4, cultural identity changes, *subtractive*, *additive*, *productive*, and *split*, all significantly increased.

Third, the increase of *subtractive change* was the most prominent among all. Such an increase became clear at the end of Year 1 and continued in subsequent years. In addition, students

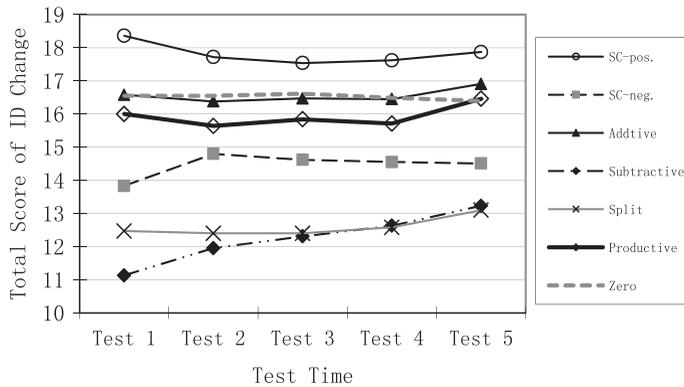


FIGURE 1 Mean of total scores for self-identity types over the 4 years.

majoring in English on the whole experienced more identity changes than students of other majors.³

Findings from qualitative data were largely in line with the above patterns from quantitative data but with more subtleties and complexities. Major features will be discussed in the following sections.

Self-Confidence as the Most Prominent Identity Change

Within the psychological tradition that focuses on individual traits, self-confidence, or self-esteem, was often taken as a predictor of learning outcome (e.g., Dörnyei, 2005). In the present study, *self-confidence change* was perceived as a learning outcome. This is because English is a target of investment with immense capital value in the Chinese market under globalization, especially in the future career market and, hence, the present learning competition market. For example, to graduate from university, a certificate of national English test (College English Test, Band 4 [CET-4]) used to be a must for all and is still a must for some universities (e.g., University D). In the job market, College English Test—Band 6 (CET-6) certificates are preferred by foreign enterprises. For future graduate studies in North America and Britain, scores of international tests such as TOEFL, GRE, and IEALT are needed. Even employment and promotion of Chinese enterprises at home will require English proficiency. Basically, English is a license to an individual's career development even in domestic environments. Under such a social condition, it is not a surprise that one's self-confidence is influenced by (perceived) competence in English. Such L2 learner/user identity will in turn influence further learning motivation.

³To be more specific, MANOVA results regarding main effect of major demonstrate that English majors experienced greater *positive self-confidence*, *additive*, *subtractive*, and *productive changes* than non-English majors. Non-English majors showed greater *negative self-confidence* and *zero changes* than English majors. There was no significant major difference on *split change*. The overall greater change with English majors may be explained by their richer access to the English language and culture, higher EFL proficiency, and motivation orientation prior to choosing their major. Detailed analysis is left out from this paper due to limited space.

TABLE 6
ANOVA Results on Self-Identity Development Over the 4 years

<i>ID Change</i>		<i>Test 1</i>	<i>Test 2</i>	<i>Test 3</i>	<i>Test 4</i>	<i>Test 5</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>DF</i>	<i>Post hoc Test (Bonferroni/Dunnnett T3)</i>	<i>Mean Difference</i>
Pos.	Total	18.36	17.72	17.54	17.62	17.87	11.402***	4, 5456	Test 1>Test 2	.639***
SF	SD	3.31	3.19	3.40	3.35	3.57			Test 1>Test 3 Test 1>Test 4 Test 1>Test 5	.817*** .743*** .487***
Neg.	Total	13.83	14.80	14.62	14.55	14.51	10.408***	4, 5451	Test 2>Test 1	.970***
SF	SD	4.25	4.02	4.02	3.82	4.12			Test 3>Test 1 Test 4>Test 1 Test 5>Test 1	.795*** .722*** .688***
Sub.	Total	11.13	11.95	12.31	12.63	13.23	48.577***	4, 5459	Test 2>Test 1	.820***
	SD	3.44	3.61	3.92	3.94	4.11			Test 3>Test 1 Test 4>Test 1 Test 5>Test 1 Test 5>Test 2 Test 5>Test 3 Test 5>Test 4 Test 4>Test 2 Test 5>Test 1	1.177*** 1.506*** 2.106*** 1.286*** .929*** .600* .686*** .626***
Split	Total	12.47	12.40	12.40	12.58	13.10	8.015***	4, 5457	Test 5>Test 1	.626***
	SD	2.91	3.10	3.31	3.33	3.87			Test 5>Test 2 Test 5>Test 3 Test 5>Test 4	.696*** .699*** .515*
Add.	Total	16.58	16.38	16.47	16.45	16.91	5.507***	4, 5441	Test 5>Test 2	.524***
	SD	2.67	2.65	2.74	2.92	3.06			Test 5>Test 3 Test 5>Test 4	.440** .459**
Pro.	Total	16.00	15.64	15.84	15.71	16.46	8.450***	4, 5456	Test 5>Test 1	.459*
	SD	3.55	3.50	3.60	3.53	3.52			Test 5>Test 2 Test 5>Test 3 Test 5>Test 4	.814*** .611*** .750***
Zero	Total	16.55	16.55	16.61	16.49	16.39	.636	4, 5431		
	SD	3.46	3.34	3.42	3.31	3.36				

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$.

Quantitative analysis showed that *positive self-confidence* was the most prominent category of change, as seen in Figure 1. In addition, the freshman year saw a significant decrease in *positive self-confidence* and increase in *negative self-confidence* (1-way ANOVA result in Table 6). After the freshman year, both *positive* and *negative self-confidence* changes remained stable until graduation. Qualitative data analysis indicated that specific meanings of self-confidence related to English varied at different stages of learning.

Beginning years: Study competition and critical thinking. The marked drop of self-confidence in the freshman year indicated students' initial confusion, frustration, and adjustment to their university life, especially in study competition among peers. Some students felt strongly about their comparative personal value marked by English proficiency:

When I listen[ed] to the VOA special News, I found it's hard for me to catch the words, but at the same time, my classmates already write [wrote] down almost the whole paragraph! When I was in my English reading class, I found my spoken English is [was] so poor that sometimes I don't [didn't] dare to open my mouth. . . . I first time realize[d] my condition of English learning. So dangerous! I can imagine when our high school students [came for] reunion, the first thing I want to tell them is my poor English. (Cao Yu, UE, J3)⁴

With students who majored in English, the feelings were particularly apparent:

I came to understand my English was almost nothing but poor compared with theirs [my classmates,]. . . . I can't ever imagine how outstanding they are. . . . I'm like a rabbit [rabbit] which ran in the forest and got lost and couldn't find right way to get out (Wang Junli, UB, J2).

Some students reacted to their first mid-term test results strongly:

It was a moody mooring. I almost fainted the moment I saw the clear real marks on the paper, less than 80. I felt heart pounding, blood rushing, my head hurt and dark before my eyes. I could not believe it. That night, I could not fall asleep. The first failure in exam was a big burden for me, baring enough to destroy all my confidence and content built upon those golden days, that extraordinary success and encouragement even flatters. I was a little fiddle weak and sad. No desire, no motivation. (Li Li, UA, J5)

The initial pressure and frustration also came from grappling with the different logic of thinking embedded in English reading and writing. English major Ye Congcong wrote (UB, J3):

Kept away from the lovely stories of the celebrities, or the interesting accounts of beautiful places, which the text book in my past English study primarily consists of, at present, we are presented with articles on "universal issues." On one hand, such profound topics have greatly enlarged my knowledge and broadened my eyesight; on the other hand, however, the abstract ideas and the logic hidden in the letters constantly puzzled me. Just take the criticism against the mass medium in A Letter From Hell and Salt for instance: it took quite ages for me to fully understand why "The newspapers help to spread ignorance, for its content is news, which is not, for most of the time, knowledge." By and large, at times, I just couldn't figure out what the writer intends to convey, which is very depressing. I suppose that the lack of ability of digging out the hidden meaning is probably the sad result of my poor logic. Thus, it caused huge frustration. . . .

Since my first lesson of Intensive Reading, I was brought home to many issues I've never laid a single piece of attention on, and as a result, I was considerably shocked when they were thrown to

⁴In this report, the following codes are used to refer to the source of data. UA stands for University A; J12 stands for the 12th journal; I8 stands for the interview in the eighth semester; GI8 stands for the group interview in the eighth semester; O8 stands for observation field notes obtained during the eighth semester. All student names are pseudonyms. Interview excerpts are translated from Chinese. English journal excerpts are all in the original form; necessary corrections and rephrasing are provided in parentheses.

me. Before reading *The Abstractions Of Beasts*, I'd never noted how a superior position we human beings placing ourselves to the animals; not until having finished *Salt* did I realize how privileged I, a college student, am and thus how important a role I need to play in the society; it is *A Letter From Hell* that pressed on me the danger of focusing on materialism and ignoring the spiritual part of myself.

Generally speaking, new ideas were continuously poured into my head, and my old value was collapsing. Perhaps I was too ignorant before, having little critical thinking, absorbing everything without doubting, narrow-minded and shallow. However, now, I gradually realized that there is another way of seeing the world—thinking critically, sifting through layer and layer of different versions of an understanding of the same issue, and finally figuring out my own point of view.

Four months passed. Yet these four months left so deep tracks in my life, in my understanding of the world. These four months witnessed the frustrations I experienced in the course of learning English at Univ. B. These four months helped me realize how shallow I was and how much I could progress and develop myself. These four months indeed altered my entire philosophy. All I get out of these four months is well worth the frustrations I encountered, isn't it?

Such data revealed that students' experience with EFL learning, even when confined to the classroom, was not without depth. While interacting with the English text, in reading as well as in writing, they began to be associated with the cognitive and value conventions that the code enacted (Kramsch, 2000), which often clashed with their L1 conventions. They also displayed interesting ambivalences in learning motivation, in that values might be assigned to frustration and pain, which would motivate students further.

With further study and interaction with their learning environment, students gradually found their positions and strategies in English learning, and their level of anxiety in peer competition was reduced. Now learning was less targeted at scores and more toward real competence:

Once we study in order to perform well in exams, now we learn English to develop ourselves. . . . Of course, a good exam result is a way to set up confidence, if it doesn't work, it doesn't mean you can't be confident in English learning, you can make it throughout many other ways. (Luo Feng, UC, J5)

By the end of the sophomore year, most students had more or less adjusted to their university life. Many of them watched English movies and TV series, for enjoyment as well as language learning. Also, by then the majority of them had passed the national English tests, CET-4 for non-English majors and TEM-4 for English majors. Self-confidence related to English learning was no longer a burning issue for most students.

Later years: Competence in L2 use. Starting from the junior year, English-related self-confidence was related less to test scores and more to competence of L2 use. English entered students' life of entertainment, particularly in pop songs, movies, and TV series. Chen Zhun from University D felt his confidence boosted when comparing his reaction to Russian and English movies:

The other day I watched the Russian movie *Apocalypse Code*, I realized that I had some intuitive competence in English. When I watched the Russian movie, I had to read the (Chinese) caption line by line; otherwise I couldn't understand at all what's going on. But watching English movies is different. I look at the Chinese caption occasionally, and sometimes I can even do without it. What a pleasant surprise! (I6)

Such excitement was shared by others: “When you watch American TV series, if you follow the whole season through without a break, you would really feel like speaking English. Your mouth and your tongue will feel English. The intuition of the language is excellent!” (Wen Jialu, UE, GI7).

The Internet offered electronically mediated experience of English use, and access to global communities of practice, without the learners’ physical crossing of geographical boundaries. Some students enjoyed visiting websites of English music and cartoons (Xia Jingming, UD, I2). Others surfed for English news and attended forum discussions on international affairs. After the Wen Chuan earthquake in 2008, Gao Jie reported the following:

[I] had the habit of reading Chinese reports first, and then turning to CNN, BBC, and Economist. I hate Economist most, as its view was so negatively biased. To attend this debate, I had myself registered as “CNBOY” (China Boy) on their website, and voiced my own opinions. This made me feel better. . . . It was a pity that much of my deeper thought could not be well expressed in writing. . . . The writing of each post took me a lot of time. (I6)

Increased opportunities to use English in the real world—for example, in intern jobs, competitions, and short exchange programs—helped to develop students’ English proficiency and jogged their confidence. As a computer science student, Gao Jie found a part-time job in a company, the boss of which was an American-born Chinese, stating, “This semester I’ve spent more time on using English than learning English” (I5). He had difficulties and frustrations writing English email to his boss: “Writing a few sentences in English was OK for me, but when writing a lot . . . I found it hard to express myself clearly. What’s more, the ideas I had to make clear were technical, in the field of computer science” (I5). Also in this semester, Gao Jie and several classmates formed a team to attend an all-English international software design competition. They spent a whole month writing the report in English: “It was really hard to write it out, but that’s why we have to learn. It has motivated all the more in using the language” (I5).

International events held in China, such as the 2008 Olympic Games, offered volunteer students opportunities for face-to-face contact in English with foreigners. Many enjoyed a sense of successful communication. Li Shuang from University C said, “During Beijing Olympic Games, when a foreigner asked me the way to some place, I told him by using very simple English, just some phrases, you know. But I did it and I became more confident in myself” (I7). As an English major from a foreign studies university, Bian Na worked as a practicing English journalist in the fencing competition venue, conducting interviews and writing English reports of the daily events. She felt the task was “a big challenge” to her English skills. The fencing competition “was short, each game lasted between 10 and 20 minutes. And there were multiple games every day.” The practicing journalists were required to interview athletes immediately after the game, finish the report in about 10 minutes and then hand it to the editors. All reports must be written in English, and the interviews were mostly in English. Chinese interviews with home athletes must be promptly translated into English. Such intensive training improved Bian’s English: “I can now write faster, and have a more exact sense of expression and variety use.” Moreover, she learned how some conventional expressions unique to the Chinese culture (e.g., *dachu fengge* and *dachu shuiping*, meaning “up to one’s best level in skill” and “style of play”) could be expressed in English. She also had the experience with varieties of World Englishes, and the opportunity of exploring various communication strategies. The Olympic Games experience made Bian feel that her English listening, speaking, and writing skills had greatly improved (OI).

Those who did not pass the required English tests, however, felt left behind and dissatisfied with themselves. Some even gave up trying. Ji Tong from University D gave up the pursuit of a master's degree because of his failure on the CET-4: "You know, the entrance exams for postgraduate programs will also test English proficiency. How can you pass these exams without passing CET-4? Forget about it. I finally gave it up" (I6).

When graduation approached in the senior year, students' self-confidence was increasingly related to their job hunting. From late 2008 to early 2009, it was a time when the world financial crisis made the job market fiercely competitive; universities abroad reduced financial support to foreign applicants. Praised for her fluent English in interpretation on a part-time job during the junior year, Li Jiahui from University A felt "a sense of achievement" (OGI). In his job interviews, Huang Taowei used self-presentation skills learned from English classes and English drama performance. He succeeded and chose a foreign enterprise he liked (W7). Due to his generous experience sharing and the self-confidence demonstrated during a difficult time, he was regarded as a role model, and his Internet posting of job-hunting experience was extensively forwarded by fellow students. In contrast, Wang Yan from University D had to abandon her dream of working in a foreign enterprise: "My English failed me, and I felt sad when I found it so hard for me to follow the foreigners. To work in a foreign enterprise, you need to pass CET-6 and have a good command of the basic English skills. So people like me will never get a chance" (GI8).

The specific meanings of *self-confidence change* related to English learning varied from one stage to another and from person to person. Yet it was clear that the stakes of failing in EFL learning was high, as the language proficiency was invariably bound with their future and their present. When the learners invested so much and the stakes were so high, it was not surprising that their self-concept in terms of competence was bound to the learning; it was affected by the learning result and would in its turn affect future investment.

Marked Increase of Subtractive Change

Quantitative data analysis indicates that among all types of identity changes, the increase of *subtractive change* was gradual, steady, and the most prominent (Figure 1, Table 6). While showing consistent findings, qualitative analysis provides clues to the process and manifestations of such a change and of learners' attitudes towards it.

Emergence of subtractive change. Upon university entrance, some learners showed confusion and fear of cultural identity loss related to English learning. This was more common with English majors, as Tian Xiaolu of University B stated in her first journal, using the detached and protective "he" and "we" rather than "I" as the agent:

As one's English progresses, he [the English learner] becomes fascinated by English novels, movies, movies and pop songs; he likes to include some English expressions when speaking, because it's cool; he goes to Starbucks, watches Friends and often hangs out with his American friends. He enjoys his life this way.

And then, when he has learned English for a certain amount of time, when his English has reached a certain level, he suddenly feels confused. Some of the time he is unable to express himself well in Chinese, for [he] is used to thinking in English; he realizes how ignorant he is of Chinese culture and

literature; his thoughts, concepts and beliefs, instead of according with the tradition, have become more and more similar to his European or American counterparts.

This is a problem which, I suppose, most English majors will be facing, for when we are learning a language, it is inevitable to learn about the nation's culture and its people's point of view. Sometimes, this influence is so great that we lose our own cultural identity. (J1)

English songs, movies, and TV series were common sources of English cultural exposure. Across academic majors and universities of different types, students followed the same American TV series, season after season—for example, *Friends*, *Desperate Housewives*, *Hero*, and *Boston Legal*. As Gao Fei stated, “When watching *Friends*, sometimes I could not help imitating their gestures and facial expressions. . . . My friends say I like to show off my English now, more than before, deliberately imitating the kind of spoken English and the use of words” (UE, I2).

Manifestations of subtractive change. Gradually and especially in the junior and senior years, shifts in language use, values, behavior, and lifestyles were commonly found. The preference of English pop cultural products to those in Chinese was apparent. Li Shuang said, “I am fascinated with the access to western culture . . . Without attractive plots, skilled actors and fabulous visual effects, Chinese TV programs are never a match to American ones” (UC, I5); Ren Xiaodong stated, “After you gradually get used to American movies, your entire perspective of appreciation and your views will be changed. . . . And then you'll be reluctant to watch Chinese movies. I hardly watch Chinese movies now” (UE, I5).

Admiration for Western values and lifestyles also increased:

From these films and TV series, I could get many things, some even may not directly focus on improving my English. They include the country's culture; the attitudes toward things they meet and the ways they deal with them, for example, they are more frank when talking about one thing, they do know their personal rights well and strive to protect them; their lifestyles; and some details in the daily life, for example, their servings are good, the people offering services are polite not only in restaurants but also in train stations and airports, and their people dare to fight with the things that may cause harm to them more than us. (Wen Jialu, UE, J11)

“American individualism” was commonly embraced; Chinese cultural conventions such as “seniority priority” and “secure a favorable position through personal relations” were criticized: “I prefer American individualism. . . . Individual happiness should be our ultimate goal. Only when this goal is achieved can we help others” (Dong Baohong, UE, OGI). And further,

I am disgusted by these probably good (Chinese) conventions. I'd be happy to live a Westernized life. . . . I don't feel China has a future, with its conventions of seniority priority common in many (companies and institutions). . . . It seems to me there is much freedom abroad. I haven't been abroad and don't know if it is true, but this is how it seems to me. (Liu Peng, UC, I2)

Though not common, extreme willingness to be Westernized appeared, in this case with Li Shuang from University C, at the end of Year 1: “I don't feel particularly proud of being a Chinese. . . . If sooner or later we are to be assimilated by others, I believe it is better to go abroad early, so that I'm ahead of others” (I2).

Diminished L1 proficiency, as well as the anxiety and struggle, was particularly common among English majors—for example, “I used to write Chinglish when writing English essays, and now I find myself speaking Chinese with English features. I feel really bad” (Lili, UA, I6) and,

“I find that my Chinese is really poor. It seems that my Chinese now is controlled by the western thinking and syntax” (Wei Zhen, UB, GI7). In a fourth-year elective course for English majors, the instructor asked students to complete a warm-up written exercise in Chinese. Huang Taowei was observed writing English mixed with some Chinese words. When inquired by the instructor, he responded, “Sorry, Professor, I can’t answer questions in pure Chinese anymore” (O8).

The lifestyle and value preference was also displayed in some students’ career choice. During his job-hunting experiences (*haitou*, sending one’s CV to as many work places as possible), Huang Taowei sent his CV to 83 targets. While some other students targeted at stable positions in state-owned enterprises and as civil servants, Huang’s targets were foreign enterprises:

Haitou is not aimless fishing. Basically I didn’t include state-owned or private Chinese enterprises. And I didn’t take civil servant exams. I admit that at the worst time of fear and anxiety I tried Chinese banks and China Mobile in hope of stability, but later on I found I made a big mistake. My style is at odds with that of Chinese companies. I won’t be able to fit in. So my targets now are exclusively foreign enterprises. (W7)

Attitudes towards subtractive change. About these changes found in themselves, students often had mixed feelings. Li Li from University A said, “I am inevitably westernized. I feel pathetic. I find that some of my thoughts and behaviors are already somewhat incompatible with Chinese tradition” (I6). The changes were felt to be “pathetic,” on the one hand, and “inevitable,” on the other. She was ready to live with them.

Some students had a more accepting and explorative attitude. Ye Congcong from University B accepted English as an internalized part of her life, blood in the vein:

Though I am still far from a fluent English speaker in any sense, let alone an English thinker, English is, however, the blood in my vein [vein], which forms my body, stays with me all the time, carries the oxygen for me, and maintains my life . . . Now I feel [feel] that I could never live without English. When I was hurt, I uttered “Ouch” rather than a typical Chinese “Ai you”; when I got surprised, “Jesus” was my automatic reaction; when I wanted to express myself, I found it most difficult to refrain from using English. Such reliance on English could be confusing for my friends and problematic for me in communication with non-English learners, e.g., my parents. . . . I once told my friend not to “push” her boyfriend too much, and I could not think of an appropriate Chinese translation even by now. In this sense, English is the tool of thinking for me, which I could not part with. (J12)

Still others made efforts to shun undesired changes and return to their native cultural stance. Wu Fan from University C became a fan of hip-hop performed by African Americans and related movies since his freshman year, because he thought they were cool and could not be found in Chinese culture. However, during his junior and senior years, his attitude changed from love to fear: “It was a movie that changed my attitude. It made me sick. I realized that the US is not that good. I do long for the American freedom, but its dark side scares me. African Americans do create impressive music, but they use drugs to back them up. I cannot accept drugs” (I5). He became disillusioned of the imagined American life while remaining discontent with life in China, and was left in struggle and pain. It is interesting to note that Wu Fan’s perceptions of the target culture is a simplistic, black-or-white one, and both the positive and negative impressions were obtained from pop culture. More sophisticated identity work remained to be developed.

The evident subtractive change should be interpreted carefully. With the global “move” of English and related pop culture, there is a reshuffling in the social hierarchy of not only linguistic but also cultural resources in the local context (e.g., Blommaert, 2010). Native cultural products

are replaced in a disadvantaged position, and “Chinese cultural aphasia” in EFL education (Song & Xiao, 2009) alerts attention. On the other hand, *subtractive change* is probably an inevitable psychological element in EFL learning, just like the first acculturation stage of target-culture euphoria among immigrants or sojourners (Brown, 1986; Smalley, 1963), though whether such *subtractive change* constitutes a distinct developmental stage is subject to further investigation. Only through cultural comparison and critical thinking can learners develop deeper understanding of different cultures, hence, desired identity integration.

Emergence and Development of Additive and Productive Changes

Quantitative data analysis shows that *additive* and *productive* changes ranked relatively high on the whole and exceeded the critical value (15); both significantly increased in Year 4. This is consistent with previous findings (Gao et al., 2004) that productive change can be achieved by ordinary learners as well as “best foreign language learners” (Gao, 2001, 2002). Yet to some extent, the *additive* and *productive* changes shown in the data might be a projection of the ideal L2 self (Dörnyei, 2005) or imagined identity (Norton, 2001), a goal to be achieved. Qualitative data could be more revealing of the actual depth and width of change.

Bilingual game. To some learners, the identity shift associated with *additive change* was a playful game. This was demonstrated in their use of English and Chinese names: “When called by my English name, I seem to be turned into another person, experiencing another life. That is to say, I can put on a mask and be another girl called ‘Apple.’ And I am always enjoying the magic of that small trick” (Liu Xiao, UA, J4).

Sometimes the switch meant a particular situational identity: “During the English class, our teacher would call our English names, which created a vivid atmosphere and we found ourselves comfortable when we talk, discuss in English. English names meant informal for us so we relaxed” (Ye Congcong, UB, J4).

There were also times when students created new Chinese (nick)names based on their English names, and the new name bore no resemblance to their original name: “Not as many students of us call others English names in our life as in the English class. Usually we call others nicknames or adapt our English names to lovely Chinese ones. For example, I call Melody, ‘Mai Mai.’ . . . We call Lily, one of my best friends, ‘Li Li’” (Ye Congcong, UB, J4). The creation here was not only a playful game player, but also a casual and free-expressing peer communication environment.

Such a result was largely in agreement with previous findings of multilingual language play (Belz, 2002). The playful experiences might not involve “feelings of ambivalence that come with critical experience” (Block, 2007, p. 122), yet they did involve some level of transcultural exploration of identity, which might well be the tip of a profound iceberg.

Critical self-reflection in learning. More profound intercultural experience happened when learners started to critically reflect on their *subtractive* experience and struggle to sort out their bilingual identity dilemmas. For some learners, such reflection began at college entrance. Tian Xiaolu, after describing subtractive experience using a detached position of “he” and “we,” stated the following:

It is odd that an English learner is likely to be more interested in his own culture. But is he subconsciously seeing from a foreigner’s view, or is he simply aware of the importance of maintaining

his own culture against the impact of the others? As far as I am concerned, the answer is both: the former brings me to realize the splendour of the Chinese culture which I have ignored for so long as a Chinese (for which I should feel ashamed); the latter, I believe, is something that we English learners should always bear in mind—instead of simply receiving (or even receiving without choosing), we should do more on keeping (or perhaps giving, too). . . . We should at least treat our culture and other cultures equally, to know and to take the best part of each of them. (J1)

In actual behavior, Tian was observed to be highly motivated in English learning. She gave herself a hard-to-pronounce English name in high school. At one of those beginning sessions of Intensive Reading class in the first year, she could promptly react to the instructor, showing her familiarity with Greek mythology, and pronounce the Greek gods' names correctly in English (O1). Yet in the second year, she critically responded to rules of writing set by an American instructor:

There are, of course, many more rules to be observed. In this game of communication, native speakers of the language make the rules, and we accept them. This is what makes the experience uncomfortable sometimes, even somewhat painful. As learners of a foreign language, we are constantly adjusting ourselves to the conventions, logic and value that are inseparable from the language. This is painful because somewhere during the process, we are lost. We forget who we were in the first place, being no longer able to tell what is imposed on us from what has always been there. (J7)

In her junior and senior years, Tian selected courses of the Chinese language, culture, and philosophy in order to strengthen her native cultural roots. For an English course in the fourth year, she teamed with a classmate and produced a presentation entitled "Metaphors and Metonymies of Beautiful Women in Classical Chinese." She was also observed dressing herself in a very different style than before, more like an "elegant Chinese woman" in the traditional sense. Her change in look and standard of beauty, as shown in the photos she posted on the campus Internet circle, surprised viewers (O8). EFL learning seemed to spur learners' reconstruction of native cultural identity. However superficial it might be, the effort signaled the beginning of *productive* change.

In the junior and senior years, *additive* and *productive* changes kept increasing for many students. This increase went hand in hand with increased English proficiency (See Table 2), and deepened reflections in increased English activities—internship in foreign enterprises and (inter)national institutions; communication with English-speaking teachers and exchange students; performing, directing, and writing English plays; participating in short exchange programs abroad; and so on. Among these, the 2008 Olympic Games (and Paralympics) affected a great many of the students. Over three hundred of our participants served as volunteers during the event, and many had direct experience of using English to communicate with international visitors.

Enhanced national and international awareness during the Olympic Games. Most volunteers demonstrated an enhanced national identity; many also displayed increased intercultural awareness. The majority of volunteers (and nonvolunteers) felt excited about the opening and closing ceremonies, and they were proud of being Chinese. Bian Na found her Chinese writing improved along with the improvement of English writing, while working as a journalist in English: "My Chinese writing was improved as well. As we had to write daily those days, I felt writing was easy. I wrote for our university journal and got published, and felt my writing was quite good. I just had enthusiasm to write those days, and felt I had a lot to say" (O1).

During the training period prior to the Olympic Games, several student volunteers from University B proposed a slogan in English to put up on the wall in their office in the competition venue, “We speak and the world will listen.” This was borrowed from a sentence on their campus T-shirt for the School of Foreign Languages, “We will speak and the world will listen.” According to the student designer of the T-shirt, the sentence was initially an imitation of British pop singer Robbie Williams’s lyric, “I will talk and Hollywood will listen.” Yet when the volunteers reframed the slogan in the Olympic Games context, they deleted the will in we will speak, because, “We are acting, here and now.” When the slogan “We speak and the world will listen” was put up on the wall of the service office, they felt contented and proud: “Our culture is refined and advanced. We Chinese volunteers are ambitious, passionate, and confident. The whole world is listening to us” (Gao, 2010: 10). Yet later on they realized that polarizing “we,” Chinese volunteers, and “the world” was inappropriate in the international and intercultural context of the Olympic Games because it produced a feeling of “imposition.” Before the Games started, the slogan was replaced by the names of nations represented by the competing teams, each name in its own language. The name collection also corresponded to the languages of service provided in the venue. In a retrospective discussion, a volunteer reflected:

I was very happy when I was being able to help, and received thanks for that. In my view, “we speak” is an internal talk among [Chinese] foreign language learners. As volunteers, we should focus on serving the needs of the external, so “we speak” need to be changed. After we’ve invited our guests, and they’ve got THEIR OWN positive feelings, they’ll naturally have a good impression of us. And we’ll in turn feel proud of ourselves. Serving the needs of others—this is what volunteers should do. (O7)

Behind the change of slogan and shift of thought was the *productive* development of identity, from a patriot alone to an added position of global citizen. Yet the national identity was still present at a deeper level in the desire for China to win world respect:

Sometimes I ask myself what kind of Chinese I should be and what China should be like. The answer, I think, lies more in the way we treat foreigners than in how many gold medals we can win. The Olympic Games offers us a golden opportunity to show ourselves. We should let foreigners, especially those who have never been to China, know that China is not all about poverty, and besides the growing economy, we also do well in other fields. Every Chinese citizen has such a responsibility (Feng Yuemeng, UB, OGI).

The above data reveal efforts of switching between L1 and L2, without minimizing either, and of integrating the two. *Additive* and *productive* changes were budding. From a social perspective, it can be seen as sociocultural forces negotiating with one another, the local culture struggling to make and tune its voice, to contribute to the global community while maintaining and enhancing its own identity. Psychologically, it can be seen as efforts of simultaneously discovering selfhood and specieshood, letting the two merge at a deep enough level (Maslow, 1971). The *productive* orientation was only emerging, but the emergence itself was profound.

CONCLUSION

This 4-year longitudinal study found that students experienced notable identity changes associated with EFL learning in the Chinese context. *Positive self-confidence* change was the most

prominent throughout the 4 years; *subtractive change* started low but underwent a steady increase; *additive*, *productive*, and *split changes* displayed marked increases in the fourth year. Complexities, diversities, and ambivalences in the developmental process were also discovered. The results are in general agreement with previous findings about L2 identity change in Chinese EFL contexts (Gao et al, 2004; Gu, 2009), and multi-identities construction in other contexts (Pennycook, 2007), but are characterized by its sample and time scope and by contextual features.

Despite limitations such as the sample universities confined to a geographic location in Beijing, the specific sociohistorical context and the differences between subgroups not discussed in this paper, the present study may have the following implications for EFL teaching and research in general.

First, L2 identity and its development in EFL contexts call for necessary research attention. In the environment of globalization, with the rapid development of information technology and increased intercultural exchange, the boundary between SL and FL contexts is diminishing, though not disappearing. The capital value of English as a global language has been greatly increased and enriched; the possession of such a capital means identity change, no matter in a L2 context. Thus the identity development of EFL learners is not irrelevant; the “minimal to non-existent” (Block, 2007, p. 137) conclusion is challenged.

Second, ambivalences in L2 identity development deserve careful reflection. For instance, regarding graduation, the learners’ marked increase of *subtractive change* occurred simultaneously with that of *additive* and *productive changes* and *split change*. The apparent conflict here indicates that L2 identity development in EFL contexts may not follow linear patterns where one kind of change follows the disappearance of another, as proposed in classical acculturation models for immigrants or sojourners (e.g., Oberg, 1960; Smalley, 1963). When the linguistic and cultural learning reaches a certain level, various kinds of “positive” and “negative” identity work may happen at the same time. Identity substitution, juxtaposition, and integration may all apply, though individuals may have their own favored directions and strategies. There is a common human psychological need to expand the present framework of perception and strife for a fuller view of the world. Meanwhile, there is a contrasting need of avoiding cognitive and affective dissonance and maintaining the continuity of self-development trajectory. How these conflicting needs are negotiated and resolved in various contexts will make an interesting topic for future research.

Third, while previous research proposed an ideal global language identity (Dörnyei, 2005) or L2 self within an imagined global community (Ryan, 2006) free from Anglophone cultural centrality, actual L2 identity in EFL contexts may be very different from this ideal picture of cultural equality. In the present study, although there was a considerable increase of intercultural awareness, the emerging L2 identity was by no means “global” with equal participation of various cultures. It was largely centered on Anglophone cultures, particularly that of the United States. In the reality of globalization, there is hierarchical structure in the horizontal move of linguistic and cultural resources (Blommaert, 2010). Portrayal of the actual sociolinguistic landscape of EFL learning and use calls for further empirical research around the globe.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This longitudinal study was collaborative effort of a research team, including group leaders BIAN Yongwei, LIU Lu, WANG Xiaoying, ZANG Qing, ZHAN Fengmei and team members. Earlier sections of the results have appeared in Chinese in *Waiyu Jiaoxue* 2008(6) and *Waiyu Yanjiu* 2011(2). Data merge, reorganization and rewriting were carried out for this paper.

FUNDING

The project was supported by China's National Grant for Social Sciences, No. 05BYY007, 09BYY071.

REFERENCES

- Belz, J. (2002). Second language play as representation of the multicompetent self in foreign language study. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 1, 13–39.
- Block, D. (2007). *Second language identities*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). The form of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–158). New York, NY: Greenwood Press.
- Brown, D. (1986). Learning a second culture. In J. M. Valdes (Ed.), *Culture bound* (pp. 33–48). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Clarke, M. A. (1976). Second language acquisition as a clash of consciousness. *Language Learning*, 26, 277–290.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *The social psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (Eds.). (2009). *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Fromm, E. (1948). *Man for himself*. London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Gao, F. (2011). Exploring the reconstruction of Chinese learners' national identities in their English-language-learning journeys in Britain. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 10, 287–305.
- Gao, Y. H. (2001). *Foreign language learning: "1+1>2."* Beijing, China: Peking University Press.
- Gao, Y. H. (2002). Productive bilingualism: 1+1>2. In D. W. C. So & G. M. Jones (Eds.), *Education and society in pluralistic contexts* (pp. 143–162). VUB Brussels University Press.
- Gao, Y. H. (2010). Speaking to the world: Who, when and how?—An ethnographic study of slogan change and identity construction of Beijing Olympic Games volunteers. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 20, 1–26.
- Gao, Y. H., Zhao, Y., Cheng, Y., & Zhou, Y. (2004). Motivation types of Chinese university undergraduates. *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*, 14, 45–64.
- Gao, Y. H., Zhao, Y., Cheng, Y., & Zhou, Y. (2007). Relationship between English learning motivation types and self-identity changes among Chinese students. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41, 133–155.
- Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and motivation in second language learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Gu, M. Y. (2009). *The discursive construction of second language learners' motivation*. Berlin, German: Peter Lang.
- Guiora, A. (1972). Construct validity and transpositional research: Towards an empirical study of psychoanalytic concepts. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 13, 139–150.
- Kramsch, C. (2000). Social discursive constructions of self in L2 learning. In J. Lantolf (Ed.), *Sociocultural theory and second language learning* (pp. 133–153). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Lambert, W. E. (1974). Culture and language as factors in learning and education. In F. E. Aboud & R. D. Meade (Eds.), *Cultural factors in learning and education* (pp. 91–122). Bellingham, WA: Fifth Western Washington Symposium on Learning.

- Li, Z. Z., Bian, Gao, Y. H., Dai, Lu, Wang, L. Y., Wang, C. J. (2007). *Cross-cultural autobiographies and the teaching and learning of English*. Beijing, China: Higher Education Press.
- Maslow, A. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York, NY: Viking Press.
- Norton, B. (2001). Non-participation, imagined communities and the language classroom. In M. Breen (Ed.), *Learner contributions to language learning: New directions in research* (pp. 159–171). Harlow, UK: Pearson Education.
- Norton Peirce, B. (1995). Social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 9–31.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Culture shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 7, 177–182.
- Pavlenko, A. (2003). “I never knew I was a bilingual”: Reimagining teacher identities in TESOL. *Journal of language, Identity, and Education*, 2, 251–268.
- Pennycook, A. (2007). *Global Englishes and transcultural flows*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Qu, W. G. (2005). On issues concerning English and identity research in China. *Journal of Chinese Sociolinguistics*, 5, 93–116.
- Ryan, S. (2006). Language learning motivation within the context of globalization: An L2 self within an imagined global community. *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 3, 23–45.
- Schumann, J. H. (1978). The acculturation model for second language acquisition. In R. C. Gingras (Ed.), *Second language acquisition and foreign language teaching* (pp. 27–50). Arlington, VA: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Smalley, W. A. (1963). Culture shock, language shock, and the shock of self-discovery. *Practical Anthropology*, 10, 49–56.
- Song Y. W., & Xiao, L. F. (2009). The present situation of Chinese cultural aphasia in college English teaching in China. *Foreign Languages in China*, 32, 88–92.
- Taguchi, T., Magid, M., & Papi, M. (2008). The L2 motivational self system among Japanese, Chinese and Iranian learners of English: A comparative study. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 66–97). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Wang, C. M. (2004). Self-concept, English pronunciation and EFL learning. *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*, 36(1), 56–63.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire (Identity change section, translated from Chinese)

31. I feel no confidence in myself when I invest much in English learning but make little progress.
32. I enjoy the authentic English when I watch the English movies, just as I enjoy the authentic Chinese when I watch the Chinese ones.
33. It's impossible for me to become a different person simply because I have learned to have a good command of English.
34. I often find myself torn between conflicting values since I started learning English.
35. English learning has allowed me to reflect upon the Chinese language and tradition that I have always been taken for granted.
36. I am very frustrated as I have hardly improved my competence in writing despite all the efforts I have made.
37. The more I learned to appreciate English literature and arts, the more I am interested in the Chinese literature and arts.
38. Poor listening comprehension has made me feel inferior to others when I try to communicate with others in English.
39. My interest in learning other languages has grown since I started learning English.
40. Sometimes I am confused whether I should be more of an individual or of a member of the collective as a result of my English learning.

41. Whenever I overcome a new difficulty in English learning, I find myself becoming a better self.
42. I would have doubt about my competence whenever I have setbacks in English learning.
43. I have found myself somewhat Westernized in thinking and behavior after I started learning English.
44. I began to reject some of the Chinese traditions after I started learning English,.
45. I feel proud of myself when I finish writing an email message in English to my satisfaction.
46. Even if I can express myself in English, I am still what I used to be.
47. Whenever there is a controversial issue, I tend to go along with the Chinese teachers, but argue with the foreign teachers.
48. My self-confidence keeps growing along with the improvement of my English language competence.
49. When eating out with foreign friends, I tend to wonder if I should pay the bill or go Dutch with them.
50. The more fluently I can speak in English, the better I feel about myself.
51. In writing personal statements for education abroad or socializing with foreign friends, I tend to value independence, while interacting with my parents or relatives, I prefer depending on each other.
52. I get higher scores in English exams, which make me feel more confident in interacting with my classmates.
53. When switching between English and Chinese ways of behavior, I feel I am being torn in half.
54. Since I began learning English, I have become more and more uncomfortable with such Chinese hospitality as insisting on putting more food on others' plates at the dinner table.
55. The improvement in my language skills in English has enhanced my appreciation for the Chinese.
56. I find myself inferior to other classmates because of my poor command of English.
57. I often forget how to write Chinese characters as I am immersed in English learning.
58. Learning English has enabled me to be more considerate and better able to communicate with others.
59. Nothing has changed in myself since I started learning English.
60. I can switch between English and Chinese according to the needs of the context as if I have an automatic switch there.
61. Upon hearing someone say to me, "You look so beautiful/handsome today" in English, I always respond "Thank you," but if someone praise me in Chinese, I will respond in a Chinese way, "No, no, I'm not that beautiful."
62. English learning has hardly any impact on me except for the improvement of language skills.
63. I have become uncomfortable with some of the Chinese traditions after I started learning English.
64. I tend to use some English words when I speak Chinese, which makes me feel rather weird.
65. It is so boring to talk about changes brought about by English learning. These statements are meaningless to me.