Research Article

Becoming Global Citizens through Bilingualism: English Learning in the Lives of University Students in China

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The ongoing globalisation has led to a tremendous expansion of the English language. With China striving to become part of the world economy since the late 1970's, there has been a great emphasis placed on the education of young people to become a world citizen with fluent English. "Being a global citizen" is having strong interests in global issues, cultivating the understanding and appreciation of diverse values, and enhancing country's competitiveness. All this however needs to be realized through communication in English, the world language. Improving communicative competence among Chinese learners of English depends on how English is learnt in the FL classroom and how it gets practiced outside the classroom. Data drawn from English corners, English clubs and English church all show that those informal learning settings have a complentary role to play especially when the formal English classroom is found having various deficits. Data also confirm that informal settings offer the opportunity to close the gap between L1 and L2 learning processes, and nurtutre learners' communicative competence through social intercourse and intercultural exchanges. Moreover, EFL learning is inherently intercultural, which facilitate cross cultural perspectives through bilingualism and bridges over the indigenous cultural traditions and the western democratic values.

1. Introduction

The concepts of "global citizenship" and "global language" are closely linked. The discussion of them will involve the concern of language education. While questioning if the use of English as a common language, but not as lingua franca, can provide us with opportunities for acting as responsible cosmopolitan citizens, without implying the loss of their linguistic and cultural roots or "the transformation of the English language into a neutral, disengaged or unaffiliated medium" (Guilherme, 2007), the ongoing globalisation and internalisation processes have led to a tremendous expansion of the English language. English is controversially chosen not only as the means of commerce, science, and technology but also as a global language of communication among people from different first language backgrounds, across lingua-cultural boundaries [1]. English learning is thus encouraged and even officially demanded in various parts of the globe resulting from the fact that English medium education brings professional success, social, and economic advancement.

With China striving to become part of the world economy since the late 1970's open-door policy, there has been a great emphasis placed on the education of young people to become a world citizen with fluent English. What has been understood as "being a global citizenship" today is to have strong interests in global issues, cultivating the understanding and appreciation of diverse values, and enhancing country's competitiveness. All this however needs to be realized through communication, and thus being able to communicate in English, the world language. Being a bilingual is thus the sine qua of the global citizenship.

It is within the above context, bilingual education with English proficiency as priority is highly regarded as individual's fundamental skill appealing to employers from all walks of life and also a passport to the international community. Bilingualism to majority of Chinese means improving communicative competence among Chinese learners of English (Jiazhen, 2007, page 212). In response to this climate, there have emerged many kinds of standardized English tests and their stage certificates catering for the increasing

demand, in which performance on the examination would have a significant impact on the individual choice, or in other words, the score might either permit or restrict a student's access to higher education or the job market. Apart from special weight given to the teaching of English as a compulsory foreign language in schools and universities, there appears a variety of learning opportunities taking place in less formal or informal settings, in which learners are able to practice and improve their English and occasionally get expert scaffolding to what they learned from textbooks in classrooms. Such settings which include "English corners," "English churches," and "English community clubs" are largely absent in the academic focus but they are so meaningful that deserve our attention.

Due to my personal involvement as a university academic and through coordinating a Goldsmiths BA course module: Study Abroad in China 2009, the research questions are identified as follows.

(1) What counts new language learning—learn to know or learn to use?

(2) Who counts as teachers in a scenario other than a formal classroom?

(3) What are learners involved expected to benefit from interactions in the context of day to day lived experience?

(4) Are these informal settings offering the opportunity to close up the gap between L1 and L2 learning processes?

The above questions are addressed within the lives of university students in China. Data is collected through participant observations, informal interviews, and students' diary. Participants are university students at Fujian Teachers University.

2. Theoretical Insights

English learning in the lives of university students in China spans knowledge across sociocultural aspects of second language learning.

The late 1960s has seen the birth of second language learning as a field of study within applied linguistics. Afterwards, in the 1970s, influenced by Vygotsky's work [2, 3] *Thought and Language,* more and more linguistic research took the sociocultural approach, which emphasises that first and second language learning involve very different processes; second language can only be learnt with intention and conscious realization; the key to gaining access to "loan of consciousness" [4] is for learners to be engaged in a supportive learning environment. The shared views are (1) language regardless of L1 or L2 is learnt for communication; (2) all languages are learnt within the sociocultural context; (3) "scald-folding," "guided participation," "collaborative learning," and "learning community" are useful mediators to achieve learners' language competence.

2.1. Social Context and Language for Communication. To majority of L2 learners, "communicative competence" [5] is the end product of learning process. Accordingly, the competent language user not only commands accurately the grammar and vocabulary of the chosen target language, but also knows how to use that linguistic knowledge appropriately in a range of social situations. Canales and Swain [6] also propose some ideas about communicative competence that includes linguistic but concomitantly deemphasize concerns with appropriateness, rules of discourse and grammatical accuracy. Allwright [7] describes a logical relationship between linguistic competence and communicative competence that demands our attention. In his diagram, "linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence" though "some areas of linguistic competence are essentially irrelevant to communicative competence" (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979:168). Johnson and Morrow [8] points out the problem with second language learners as "being structurally competent" but "communicatively incompetent" and thinks "being structurally correct is only part of what is involved in language ability" (1981:9). However, what is an appropriate teaching pedagogy that will aid the development of L2 learners' communicative competence? This remains a controversial issue, and sociolinguists differ greatly in the importance attached to input, interaction, and output.

Krashen's input [9] hypothesis states that "speaking is a result of acquisition and not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly but "emerges" on its own as a result of building competence" (Gass & Selinker, 2001:201). Krashen lists reading for pleasure as an example of "comprehensible" input, and argues the more comprehensible input learners are exposed to, the better learning results they will achieve. The hypothesis focuses on comprehensible input that causes language acquisition. Students' exposure to L2 can be maximized in four ways: comprehensible; interesting and relevant; not grammatically sequenced; sufficient "$i + 1$." The sufficient "$i + 1$" alone means the input should be a little beyond where learners are now [10]. In EFL countries, such China, classroom teaching is an important way to provide comprehensible (meaningful) input because English is a foreign language mainly learnt in class. However, the limitation with EFL classroom is (1) only one person, usually the teacher is controlling meaningful input; (2) lack of natural and relaxing learning environment.

Swain's output [11] hypothesis goes beyond the comprehension of input to other aspects of interaction that may be implicated in second language acquisition and thinks interaction does not only provide opportunities to negotiate the message of the input, but also provides learners with the opportunity to use the target language, and in using the target language, learners' (1) feedback as well as "noticing"— the learners' consciousness of the difference from their interlanguage; (2) to push learners to process language with more mental effect—pick up a hole in their interlanguage. Immersion learning classes show that output pushes learners to process language with more mental effect than does input theory. In speaking and writing, learners can stretch their interlanguage to meet communicative goal. Students' meaningful productions of language—output would thus have a potentially significant role in language acquisition and also justify the value of interaction for L2 learning. Swain

puts forward the term "collaborative dialogue" to emphasise social interaction and communicative activities. Output is generally accepted as having values as a way of not only providing practice, but promoting consciousness and hence contributing to the development of fluency. In China, while classroom culture might not very much encourage questions, those after class activities allow more freedom to engage with interactive learning, in which "mistakes are not always a mistake" [12, page 64] but an opportunity to digest.

Further to "comprehensible" input, Long's interaction [13] hypothesis holds that language acquisition takes place through conversational interaction and not just through the encountering of input. When learners are attempting to negotiate conversation in the target language, the gaps in their abilities are revealed to them. This self-realization brought about by authentic interaction will encourage L2 learners to produce target language output to negotiate meaning and seek out the knowledge they lack. Therefore, "interaction assists learning by supplying learners with comprehensible input" [14, page 171], and this input will then be used in comprehensible output and thus help in further language acquisition. Interaction is viewed as a kind of crucible that forges knowledge of an L2 through the "pouring back and forth" and "gathering together and taking apart" [15] which grammatical patterns are subjected to during the course of face-to-face communication. This hypothesis begins to explain how interaction takes place in those informal but more natural settings.

2.2. Social Context and Learning Motivation.
Language learning of any kind is contextualised, which has several implications to second language learners.

Firstly, learning a second language is not "learning how to mean" [16] because L2 or foreign language learners have already had one language present in their minds, and there is no way for them to become a monolingual native speaker by definition [17, page 7]. The process involves working out at the early stages how to express familiar concepts and meanings in the new language and, at the later stage, a new way of thinking. A number of researches [18, 19] have shown how bilinguals possess an enhanced metalinguistic, metacognitive, and analytical awareness. Such awareness termed "linguistic interdependence hypothesis" is particularly fostered when L2 learners are encouraged and have managed to transfer first language knowledge to the target language learning task. Motivation is then affirmed by learners' intended performance.

Secondly, motivations and attitudes between L1 learners and L2 learners are quite different, which may also have significant effects on the learning process. Titone [20] also claims that the reinforcers between L1 acquisition and L2 learning are different. L1 acquisition is conditioned by primary reinforcers, for instance, the need to express the wants and desires, whereas the reinforcers of L2 learning are much weaker, such as "to pass an exam, to get a certain kind of job" [17, page 115].

Affective filter hypothesis [21] states that lack of motivation and opportunity to interact in target language or with a native speaker can be an invisible barrier that hinders the progress of students in second language learning. L2 classroom, especially a foreign language classroom, may be stressful or threatening, and this may inhibit language learning as well as affecting self-esteem. Classroom anxiety for whatever reason is a very strong factor working against language learning [22, page 11].

Gardner's socioeducational model [23] presents a new insight of understanding motivation. Motivation in language learning or classroom learning can be very different. In the language learning, there are two types of motivation at playing within language learning—"integrative"—"instrumental" motivations or "intrinsic" and "extrinsic" motivations. The former is described as intrinsic interest, which will turn into willingness to interact with the other language community and positive attitudes toward the target language community, and the latter is defined as "practical, utilitarian advantages derived from language proficiency, such as a better employment opportunity or higher salary" [23]. There is no empirical evidence to show if one form of motivation is more effective than the other. The trouble with instrumental motivation is that language learning is driven by examination and isolated from educational issues altogether [24].

There are many things that can affect the motivation, among which there are high correlations between integrativeness and attitudes, instrumental orientation, and parents' encouragement. Integrativeness and attitudes in particular are the greatest influences on motivation. In the similar vein, Schumann's acculturation model [25] also emphasises embracing the target culture group. The implication for teaching is "if you want to learn English well, you should learn the culture and even at the risk of changing your own cultural identity" [17, page 170]. A successful student would be the one who has an intrinsic interest "admires the target culture—reads its literature...looks for opportunities to practice the language, and so on" [17, page 115]. Gardner and Schumann's emphasise on motivation derived from integrative-ness, and attitude has a lot of implication to my research on informal learning achievement. In China, English students are mostly instrumentally or integrally motivated as English is an international language and a "tool for trade." There is a problem with instrumental motivation within these English learners because they treat English learning like other compulsory subjects they are studying, hardly have their interest or passion in the language and culture. Some students do have a great interest in English and the classroom culture, and exam may hinder the growth of their "integrative" motivation by rote and repetition of those rules and principles. To improve this, China should provide more opportunities for English learners to get exposed in sorts of informal language learning scenarios in order to gain true fluency within their target language.

2.3. Social Context and Learning Community.
The social context not only influences attitudes towards language learning but also determines the provision of opportunities for language learning in both formal and informal settings, and the

social context is particularly the source of informal learning opportunities for language use and learning [26, page 26].

Traditionally the focus of attention has been on children's individual mind and the personal experience evident in both Chomsky and Piaget's work. Vygosky has shifted the attention into learners' interactions with others (social interaction) and thus changed the way educators think about interactions [27]. His zone of proximal development (ZPD) is to confirm that personal and social experience cannot be separated. Children's "level of potential development is determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" [3, page 86]. The distance and the actual development level between the level of potential development is cut by social interaction with a more competent member of society, and this is the means by which cultural knowledge is acquired and that all learning takes place first on an *interpersonal* level between participants before it is internalised on an *intrapersonal* level within the individual self. This view about social interaction found its application in Swain's collaborative dialogue and Schumann's "acculturation" theory [25].

Different researchers illustrate the nature of interpersonal learning through a range of metaphors.

During the 1970s, researchers detailed ways in which caregivers provide finely tuned tuition to young children as they complete cognitive and linguistic tasks, referring to this as "scaffolding" [28] whereby adults provide a "loan of consciousness" [4] to the child. Since the 1990s, the metaphor of "guided participation" coined by Rogoff [29] has focused more upon *the child as coconstructing meaning* with an adult [28, 30–32]. Learning after all occurs in coparticipation and is mediated by others (summarized by [27]). The concept of "communities of practice" is proposed by Lave and Wenger [31] and developed by Brown [33] as part of an effort to describe and advocate practice in classrooms in which teachers and children engage in joint inquiry and generate group learning. This concept is interpreted and implemented by Rogoff et al. [34] within the specific context of formal and informal interactions in a school for young children [27, pages 10–12].

Work and play between peers and siblings, however, have revealed a much more equal relationship in teaching and learning. Like Piaget, Vygosky believed that much learning takes place when children play. Scaffolding can be done not only by the teacher but also by the child's peers who already possess the desired skills. The metaphor of "synergy" [35] has been used to show that both younger and older sibling learn from each other, particularly when children are bilingual. The older child learns as much through explaining words in a new language as well as acting like a cognitive facilitator as the younger child who is being "taught" through the medium of play. Peers who speak the same language also act as skilled facilitators of classroom learning as they participate together in "collaborative learning" [36, 37]. Mother-tongue speakers can also play a crucial role in initiating children into a new language [27]. The value of cooperative classroom learning, in which peers work together on academic tasks and provide one another with motivation, guidance, and feedback [27, 38, 39], also suggests that in circumstances in which children have practice in interaction, they may be very helpful to one another. Peers can serve as guides in academic activities in the classroom, especially if such interaction is encouraged in the classroom social structure by teachers, children may develop skill in academically useful forms of interaction [29]. These studies will explain why those after-class English activities help students by appealing to their interests, increasing self-confidence and improving their language competence, which are hard to achieve in the classroom.

3. Settings and Backgrounds

English Corner, English Club, and English Church are three main settings for English students to learn and practice English beyond the formal classroom.

(1) English Corner. Almost every university in China organizes an English corner. Fujian Normal University (FNU) is not the exception. Its English Corner is a weekly held on every Thursday evening. As an informal English speaking meeting, any one can come. English major students who visit the English corner are often quickly surrounded by eager students wanting to practice their English or find a language partner. English native teachers are required to join and support the conversation. The proposed topic is usually only a guide, and the conversation will steer off into any area of interest for the students. Being their teacher, I soon became part of the group discussion. We exchanged many views over a wide range of topic, which included their comments about English corner.

(2) English Club. Another informal learning occasion for English students at university is "English Club". This is similar to English Corner but is run totally by students themselves. International students are invited by email. It is normally held on Saturday night but a few times on Sunday if there is a trip to scenic spots. In this sense, "English Club" is a culture-based social occasion made for English students, very relaxing and full of fun. Different themes or activities are organized to attract participants. Amusing activities such as singing and dancing, "western music buffet," and games about vocabulary, proverbs and idioms are the normal practice. Almost every university has such clubs but may be named differently, for example, English Party, English Ballroom, or English Neighborhood. "Saturday Club" is the name given at Fujian University. We were invited a few times.

(3) English Church. Christianity has existed in China since at least the seventh century and has gained influence over the past 200 years. Since 1949, when the PRC was founded, Christianity and other local and imported western religions had been suppressed; however, Bulddhism and Muslim due to their majority followers, had been kept their modest place. Things began to change in the 1980s. The growth of the faith has been particularly significant in the recent decades. Christianity in particular appears to be most thriving. According to the latest surveys done by China Partner and East China Normal University in Shanghai, there are now 39–41 million

Protestant Christians in China. What has been surprising is that there are lots of young people and university students have converted themselves to Christianity.

There are two churches nearby the university; however, the one offers English session is pack with university students. Why is that? The reasons behind may be very complex, but it certainly has a lot to do with the powerful impact from English and the dominant culture.

4. Findings and Analysis

The above three settings, English Corner, English Club, and English Church though different in form, share many things in common and have a complementary role to play in the life of English learning.

4.1. Data from English Corner. Take English corners for example, students I met and talked all confirmed that this regular English speaking meeting provides them with various opportunities. The following are extracts from my field notes documenting what students told me about their views of English corners.

4.1.1. A Place to Speak English in a Virtual Situation and Increase Leaning Consciousness.

> Shani: *Our class mostly involves reading and grammar learning. Even when the text is about a dialogue, we don't learn to talk. We normally learn the dialogue and read out those sentences by memory if we can it is really a great place to me. I can practice what I have learnt from the textbook and talk to English major students and sometimes meet with English native speakers if lucky enough.*

> Gang: *I always learnt oral English in the class, sometimes we have an English native teacher to conduct the learning but we still lack practice, let alone using them in the real situation. I am a high achiever in the listening and reading comprehension test but very poor in the English conversation. When speaking carries on, I have no time to think what to say. I think I need more face to face communication to practice my oral English. That is why I come regularly to this speaking meeting.*

> Lihua: *I did withdraw for a period because we felt bored about those simple and repeated questions but I came back because I realised that I could make more out of the opportunity by paying more attention to what I have come across during the week and become very keen on those useful vocabulary, good expressions and idiomatic usages. Speaking does help my other skills—listening, reading and writing.*

4.1.2. A Place to Build Confidence and Motivation. Some students shared with me their first days in the English corner

and said their motivation and confidence are developed side by side with their attitude towards learning English.

> Tian: *I am normally very quite in the class, felt very nervous to stand up and talk before the whole class. When I first joined the group, I listened to others almost the whole evening because I dare not cut in and utter a single sentence. This feeling stayed with me until I made new friends there.T hey don't speak perfect English but love talking and they don't mind about loosing [sic] face, why should I?*

> Lan: *Speaking up is not as terrible as expected. English corner is an encouraging place, where I am easily influenced by peers and get intoxicated in the atmosphere. In fact we are all passionate learners but we never realized before because we were always haunted by exam one after another. We were afraid making mistakes but there is no such worry for me now as I want to be bold and try out my courage.*

> Kai: *My motivation in speaking English was developed after I got to know some international students. Some are English native but others not. You learn from mistakes they pointed out for you. Through talking, I get more familiar with the usage, vocabulary and expressions I learnt from the class. What's more I am imitating their accent and their way of expressing themselves. I tried to use them in my conversation and of course sometimes on purpose to attract girls.*

4.1.3. A Place to Develop a Global Learning Community. In the English corner, speakers are from different departments, different ethnic backgrounds and even different countries. They meet with the same learning interest, share views in the world common language, and in particular they are concerned with global issues, cultivating the understanding and appreciation of diverse values, and move beyond purely linguistic performance.

> Weibo: *I attended the English corner when I got to my second year. The initial thought for me to come is not very pure. My classmates and I thought we could meet girls from English department, but sorry to say up till now I have no girl friend, instead I have made many female friends and male friends including international student teachers from abroad. We talk widely over various topics and share views of common interest and even debate from individual perspectives. What I have benefited greatly is not only English but English culture and comparative perspectives. I think what I learn from them is as much as what they learn from me.*

> Jing: *We are more like brothers and sisters. Every body is here for the same learning purpose No*

examination, and no competition, but friendship. We keep each other's company and build our confidence from each other's encouragement. Those able help those less able; sophomores assist freshmen. Those English native teachers and international students are always surrounded by the big crowd. They bring with them not only authentic accent, idiomatic expressions but also the English culture and a new way of thinking to share with us'. It is really wonderful!

Xiaobai: *English Corner to me is just like an international forum, where every one [sic] speaks English and expresses their views of the world. English constitutes a common ground for cross and intercultural communication in which learning identity cut across different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.*

4.2. Data from English Club. Another example contributing to students' English learning beyond the classroom is "English Club". The following are extracts from my field notes documenting one of the Saturday evening we participated in.

 Saturday 17 October 7:35pm

The "Saturday Club" was held in Building Yifu, Student Union of the university. When we stepped in, a song named 'Memory' like breeze caressed our face. We were immediately immersed in the "English home culture". The organizers told me that they were very lucky to have our English native student teachers join them. Roughly 22 students turned up, and plus five of us, making up 27. The evening began with a group singing. Each participant was given a copy of the song "Shining Friends", a popular pop song. A video of the song with the lyrics was played and the words were displayed on the interactive whiteboard in English as well as Chinese to help understanding for the mixed-ability group. In the front of the class, one of the students was tasked with singing a line into the microphone then letting the group repeat. After this was done twice, we sang together with the music. Afterwards, the cohort was sitting in a kind of circle. A soft toy was thrown around the group and asking whoever caught the toy to call out an English proverb, a poem, a joke, a story, singing or whatever the person felt like to offer. In the game like activity, we were all highly amused. People seemed to avoid hit by the flying toy, but once being targeted, s/he should perform a verbal skill. Alice was once targeted; she invited Sarah to sing along with her. The song they sang was "Memory", the song we heard when we stepped in, which has been very popular in China since the 1950s. Gemma recited an English verse when targeted, and Maryna invited the whole group to sing a

well known Russian song in China—"Kajiusa". Alice was a best singer, she was then immediately surrounded by students, and they sang one after another together. I would say that this is an effective way of not only learning English, but also understanding the English culture through the songs (Author's field note).

The English club has impressed me that song singing as well as other verbal activities is really promoting their integrative interest, and song singing in particular is a good way of improving learners' confidence in their pronunciation and an understanding of speech rhythms in English. Other activities that included throwing a soft toy around the group and asking whoever caught the toy to recite a little verse or call out a joke are very functional as well and they also help increase confidence within the learner, which may then make them more comfortable in conversation. Most importantly, we see peer support, bilingual exchange, intercultural communication and collaborative learning in between.

4.3. Data from English Church. The English church is a special learning scenario besides English corners and clubs.

 Vignettes 1 Shipu Church 11 October 2009 evening

The English session began by watching a video, in which an English priest was on the screen reading and interpreting the Bible while audience in the hall was listening and taking notes. A handout was prepared for each audience to follow. The theme was about "Developing Faith" (See the video clip).The video conference lasted about an hour. After that, participants were split up into three groups, each of 6–8 people. They read the material that is about how to win over temptation with the guidance of a fluent English speaking person. Everyone was asked to read a paragraph by turn and paraphrased meaning in English, occasionally in Chinese. Afterward, one of the many different cards was handed out to every one in the group. Each card has a bible quote written in English and Chinese on it. Sheets were given out as well for the group to work through and discuss. Just as the organizer understood, these students can increase their proficiency in English by "using a source of Christianity as a building block of language acquisition". It is apparent that each group leader is in charge of the process. The scaffolding given was very much in a way to care for individual differences. Some needed more help in pronunciation, some in vocabulary, and others in syntax or grammar points. I was allowed to observe and filmed the whole scenario to the end.

What does this English session mean to those student participants? I chatted with some students and also talked to

the lady who is in charge of the English session. The following are a few extracts from my *video* interview data.

> *I quite like the group discussion as we can practice our oral English, and we also learn how to express ourselves and communicate with others, learning from each others' strong points and building up confidence of speaking out. The most advantage of being in this community is we get supported from peers also from teacher* (Student A).

> *We learn good English from Bible. The focused learning is very important as we often get confused with English articles, propositions and phrasal verbs and all that. The usages in different articles are diverse, but Bible gives us a textbook standard, and we need this because we have not yet had enough language sense as in our mother tongue* (Student B).

Dr Sing, a middle aged woman came to me when the session was over. She is an organiser of the English session.

> Author: *How did you have the idea to run this English session?*

> Sing: *Well, there has been an increasing demand for English learning, so I think the Service in English should be a good idea. The English session was tailor made for learners' individual need, especially those university students. They can improve their English in a friendly learning community; get to understand the English culture, and also help themselves become good persons.*

> Author: *Can you talk a little bit more about this "learning community"?*

> Sing: *Participants meet and make friends with each other, sharing knowledge and their learning experience through speaking, listening, and reading. We have group leaders, who will help with reading material, guiding them in reading, and through the group discussion, they practice their speaking skill.*

> Author: *Do you mind they come here only for this language purpose?*

> Sing: *Not at all, as I believe they would learn and internalize those important values and faith that Bible wants to convey. Besides, the Bible we use for reading and discussion is in the bilingual form, which helps ease understanding. Some advanced learners use them to practice their translation because language in Bible is considered very authentic. I trust through this focused and guided learning, they absorb* Christianity *and eventually they will become converted into a real Christian. Christians did a lot of good things in China. English language is powerful influence, so we want to empower young people a pathway to the value system of mainstream society.*

From the above extracts, we notice that the English Bible session provides an important learning opportunity for English learners, in which guided and collaborative learning takes place; expert scaffolding from fluent English speakers is of high teaching value. Apparently learners benefit a lot from a friendly and interactive learning environment. The data also supports the work of cultural psychology on the importance of faith in developing cognition, where trust, respect, and reciprocity typify their interaction.

4.4. Implication for Language Learning in China. Firstly, it is fair and necessary for the FL class to concentrate more on teaching those important grammar rules with high consciousness in acquisition. However, this cannot become an excuse for deemphasis or overlook of the ultimate goal for any language learning—communication. We often see students from China even those of English major are not confident in group discussions or seminars, nor are they competent enough in the academic reading and writing although they were enrolled to English universities with marvelous scores in TOFEL or IEL test. Therefore, the suggested solution to this deficit is to adopt a new and innovative approach to English teaching and learning so as to shift the focus of teaching grammar to teaching use. Currently, the communicative approach has increasingly become a method of fashion in China and elsewhere in EFL countries. Although little evidence has shown the approach has its effective application in the EFL classroom due to limited comprehensible input and an authentic communicative context, the nature of communicative approach is well applied in those activities that engage more interactive learning, naturalistic environment, and face-to-face communication. The data from students' comments reveal that students can learn and memorise linguistic points well for exam but they are less confident to use them in a natural communication situation due to lack of opportunity to use them. So when introducing the communicative approach in the classroom remains a question due to whatever reason, English Corner, English Club, and any types of learning community provide extra opportunities similar to those apparent in first language acquisition.

Second, the danger with the current foreign language classroom in China is an utilitarian attitude towards language teaching, which results in "a shift from intrinsic motivation to a concern with extrinsic factors [24]," or, in other words, "instrumental motivation" is more specified in the class room and learning is treated just as purely technical and isolated from cultural and educational issues. Plus test oriented learning momentum in the classroom that ignores meaningful input has hindered the growth of students "integrative" motivation. The research evidence shows that a highly motivated learning takes place in those informal setting; students' 'integrative' motivation is greatly nurtured through free conversations on the part of the learner. We can see the incentive with students coming to English Corner or

Club is by their passion and positive attitudes toward the target language and its culture but not by exams.

Third, the huge influence that the social context exerts on linguistic matters is the provision of the opportunities for practice. Informal learning scenarios as compared with formal classrooms offer a more naturalistic, democratic and friendly environment for social intercourse, debates and other communicative transactions. The metaphors of "guided participation," "collaborative learning," "communities of practice," and "synergy" are well reflected in the above mentioned activities. The value of this natural and collaborative learning is to cut the distance between the actual development level and the level of potential development. During interaction, "errors are signs of naturalistic developmental processes" [40, page 82], and confidence is built while consciousness is promoted. Research data has also revealed a much more equal relationship in learning. Scaffolding can also be done not only by the teacher but also by advanced peers who already possess the desired skills, for example, the student taking lead in the singing group is acting as a cognitive facilitator as the rest of the group is being "taught" through the medium of song singing. Peers who come to English Corner also act as facilitators of classroom learning as they use, revise, and "notice" what they have learnt and will learn in class. Bilingual support shown in the singing group and Bible reading session has also convinced that L1 can also play a crucial role in initiating new language learning.

5. Conclusion

The language issue seems to be absolutely crucial in the debate about citizenship and integration. Attempts at defining "global citizenship" or specific 'cultural identities' that function as criteria for education of national citizenship in China, which often go hand in hand with demands of a certain mastery of the language of particular international public spheres. Driven by the cosmopolitan power of the world English as medium of communication across commerce, media, sports, sciences, education, entertainment, and so forth, English language learning in China has therefore been considered as a fundamental tool that educates Chinese citizens in global perspectives with skills for communication across cultural boundaries. The issues of improving communicative competence among Chinese EFL learners depends on how English is taught and learnt in the FL classroom and how it is getting practice outside the classroom. Data drawn from English corners, English clubs, and English church all show that those informal learning settings in fact have a complementary role to play especially when the formal English classroom is found having various deficits because of the long existing problematic grammar teaching and the technical attitude that ignores meaningful input, interaction, and output. Research data also confirm that expert English learning does take place and nurture learners' communicative competence through social intercourse and intercultural exchanges. Moreover, EFL learning is inherently intercultural as it was where two cultures meet: the learner's and the target culture. However, the current

classroom teaching in China tends to focus on linguistic competence and overlook cultural and communicative approach to construction of learners' language competence. When dealing with cultural teaching, it commonly adopts textbook-oriented approach which is criticised as creating risks of creating and reinforcing stereotypes. On the contrary, those informal learning settings beyond the classroom provide an ideal ground for intercultural communication where diverse values and cross-cultural discourse can naturally take place via developing intercultural skills so that they become tolerant of cultural differences. This extra bonus is well reflected in participants' comment on their English Corner in particular because this regular meeting place is normally packed with English learners and English speakers with diverse linguistic and cultural background. Such an occasion places the expectation on universal values and makes language acquisition contribute to the preparation for democratic and active citizenship.

Having conversation with students who take part in these activities as well as with those who do not, we learn how integral motivation to succeed in the English learning can improve fluency through taking part in informal activities. The data has also helped us expand notions about who counts as teachers in terms of taking control of learning. These activities help students by appealing to their interests, increasing self-confidence, and equally taxing on both sides in developing bilingual and bicultural capability. Through observations, we see students' learning expertly scaffold and peers also expertly scaffolding the learning of others in ways that are not well recognised or understood in the formal classrooms and that may be particularly important in the case when English as a global language is learned in a country where the target language is not environmentally used. The English church in China as a unique learning scenario also draws our close attention, where we see a kind of generous tuition, expert scaffolding, and interactive teaching and learning offered to students through English Bible reading sessions. Research data from this scenario also supports the work of cultural psychology on the importance of faith in developing cognition, where trust, respect, and reciprocity typify their interaction, and these three aspects are also seen in other two scenarios. Due to nature of L2 learning, foreign language learning is more challenging, but if we believe any language learning involves three basic factors, aptitude, motivation, and opportunity, and their working force varies from person to person, from L1 and L2, then what we understand as a supportive learning environment should create learning conditions that would close the gap between L1 and L2 learning processes. In the recent China, many studies have been devoted to identifying various factors that are responsible for low achievement in EFL class. While mentalist and UG teaching models are blamed for their deemphasizing the role of the environmental context, and the audio-lingual model derived from behaviorism also blamed for its mechanism and negative attitude towards bilingualism, the nature of interaction, and communication shared by both L1 and L2 learning processes is overlooked or out of focus. It is apparent that those informal learning pathways beyond the classroom that appeal to students'

interests and resemble day-to-day lived experience have been playing a vital and complementary role in students' language learning. We believe that the findings from this study will inform work with teachers and students in schools and universities and those concerned with TESL at large.

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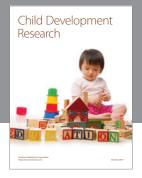
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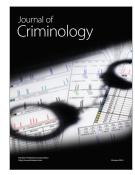[40] J. C. Richards and T. S. Rodgers, Eds., *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*, Cambridge University Press, New York, NY, USA, 2001.