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Investment and Identities: ESL Learning among Older Adult Chinese-Speaking Immigrants

Shun-Jen Hsiao

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I. Introduction

Duff defined the concept of investment as "in a somewhat more dynamic, emergent, and socially constructed view than in earlier accounts, explaining that motivation needed to be radically re-conceptualized and re-theorized in the context of contemporary notions of self and identity" (as cited inUshioda and Dornyei, 2009, p. 1).Although motivation was considered a personal characteristic in cognitivist SLA theories (Brown, 2007), it cannot fully express the language learner's agency, nor can the idea explain why some learners are able to learn English in some settings but not others (McKay & Wong, 1996; Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). Peirce (1995) proposes the concept of "investment" instead of motivation because investment indicates each learner has multiple, sometimes contradictory identities in a social context. Learners who invest in the target language also invest in their own identities. Motivation alone does not illustrate the complexity of second language learners' attitudes toward learning English because learners' social networks and their power structures should be taken into account (Norton, 2000; Peirce, 1995). Focusing on motivation not only simplifies the learner's subjectivity but it may also indicate that the unsuccessful learner is blamed for not making him/herself "more motivated" (McKay & Wong, 1996).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the status of language learners is not equal to the status of native speakers. Learners invest in the language to attain the resources that they cannot attain otherwise. Investment in a second language does not simply mean to master an L2, but to shift identity from an immigrant to a target language speaker. This study analyzes the participants' ESL learning based on the investment model which includes naturalization content and demonstrates that investment does not equal motivation.

Peirce (1995) also indicates that learners have multiple identities which are sometimes even contradictory, and every time learners use the target language they reorganize their identities, and invest in the target language. Morgan further states "Language is used to put people in their place and people use language to change the place in which they have been put" (Morgan, 1998, p. 12).

According to Peirce (1995), immigrant women in her study show different levels of motivation in different social contexts. One example from her research was newly arrived immigrant woman who decided to stop going to the ESL class because of her teacher's assignment. The ESL teacher asked the students to introduce their home countries. Even though the projects could be resourceful, the immigrant woman felt the information was not helpful for her situation in the U.S. She stated that learning about cultures in other countries could not improve her life in the U.S. She felt the school should teach her information she can use in the U.S. Peirce (1995) suggests that learners "invest" in a second language to acquire a wider range of resources, which will in turn increase their social capital. Therefore, the concept "investment" states that language learners have purposes in learning languages, and the purposes usually relate to their identities.

Learners who invest in each of the language skills (reading, speaking, etc.) can be highly selective because "different skills can have different values in relation to learner identities"(Norton, 2000, p. 11). Older adult Chinese immigrants might not plan to study in academic settings or need extensive reading and writing skills. Therefore, they might focus more on listening and speaking. However, according to Wang (1999), older adults often have a harder time with listening and pronunciation than younger adults. In addition, there is a reading and writing portion in the naturalization exam. Because of this discrepancy, I have examined whether or not the findings, that each language skill can be highly selective depending on the learners' identities, apply to this population.

II. Identity and SLA

Norton defined identity as "how people understand their relationship to the world, how that

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relationship is constructed across time and space, and how people understand their possibilities for the future" (Norton, 1997, p. 410). The relationship between language and identity might not be clear because theories of language and identities are inconclusive and conflicting (Norton, 1997).

From a socio-linguistic perspective, identity is considered a significant factor in SLA. Bourdieu suggests that the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks, and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships (as citied in Norton, 2000, p.8). Norton and Toohey (2001) also argue that even if the L2 learners have desirable learning characteristics (highly motivated), they still might not be successful L2 learners if they cannot gain access to social relations because they might not be perceived as valuable partners in communication. In other words, learners' barriers are not only their own individual factors but also how they are perceived by the community. The access to linguistic resources offered by the community makes a difference to language learners.

Norton argues that identity relates to desire for recognition and affiliation. Such desires cannot be separated from the distribution of material resources in society (Norton, 1997). As Norton (2000) argues "language teaching is not a neutral practice but a highly political one" (p. 7). It is through language that a person gains access or is denied access to certain social networks. For the participants in this study, it is through English that they gain access or are denied access to the American citizenship.

III. Investment in English: Identities and Social Challenges

This chapter examines the social challenges and multiple identities that student participants face while learning English. First, this chapter introduces the student and teacher participants that are in this study and the student participants' ESL learning in the classroom and community. Secondly, this study critically examines the students' isolation from the mainstream community. This article finds that isolation from the mainstream community has a negative effect on their ESL learning. I then discuss the participants' language, nationality, political, and classroom identities. By critically examining the student participants' identities in various discourses, this study argues that the student participants' ESL learning and their decision to naturalize is highly related to their various identities.

a) Overview of the Student Participants

The participants of this study were four older adult students and four volunteer citizenship teachers at the ESL program at PCCC. However, I talked with other students and teachers during my class observation and they also provided me with valuable insight for this research. All of the student participants were Chinese-speaking immigrants who had been in the U.S. for at least four years and are 65 years old or older. I conducted research with the participants from September 1, 2012 to February 1, 2013. During this time period, I spent about four to six hours every week in observing students' classes. I interviewed volunteer teachers and students. I analyzed textbooks, handouts, lesson plans, students' reflection notes, and students' class notes from the naturalization class.

b) ESL Learning in the Classroom

Learners who invested in each of the four language skills (reading, speaking, listening and writing) could be highly selective because "different skills can have different values in relation to learner identities" (Norton, 2000, p. 11). Almost everyone in the program wanted to work on the four skills. However, most of them first focused on listening and speaking. It seemed reasonable because the naturalization exam focused on listening and speaking comprehension. In addition, they had to listen and speak English to participants in the mainstream community. However, Mr. Lin, whose articles can be seen at multiple local Chinese newspapers, wanted to be able to write in English, so he focused tremendously on writing while others wanted to be able to communicate and focus on listening and speaking. His identity as a writer affected his focus on ESL learning. On the contrary, Ms. Wong focused on listening and speaking. According to Ms. Wong, she was worried because her daughter came home so late; she admits, "I need to study English. I need to speak English when my daughter was not around." Ms. Wong's identity as a caregiver affected her investment in the certain selective language skills in English.

Students and teachers alike felt grammar and pronunciation were crucial for the naturalization exam, so they paid attention to both areas. According to Justin, "They just basically focus on citizenship. If it relates to ESL generally, they generally like it. Like pronunciation and sentence order which improve their English generally".

> Larry stated: Grammar, pronunciation can use some work...the way I see it they don't need to speak English perfectly, but they have to be able to communicate, and take the message across to the officials in order for them to pass the test, so we don't put too much focus on exact grammar, basic grammar yes, we don't go into very deep into grammar, because it's just not necessary. But if it's like capitalize or basic, everything [that] they will get punished during the interview, obviously I am going to correct it.

Both teachers and students might be highly selective in ESL learning while trying to pass the exam.

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c) ESL Learning outside of the Classroom

Older adults tended to be isolated from mainstream community in society (Merriam, Caffarella & Baumgartner, 2007; Wang, 1999), so they had limited opportunities to learn English outside of the classroom. Except Ms. Chen who lived with her American husband, the student participants had very limited ESL learning resources in their communities. As Wang (1999) pointed out, one of the major complaints from both younger and older adult immigrants in her study is that they do not have the "environment" to study English. The participants in this study were retired. Some other students at the center were not required to speak English at work. Mrs. Wong lived in a senior apartment. Even though she lived among a diverse population of seniors, she only communicated with Chinese and Russian immigrants. She said: "many of the seniors stays at their home and watched TV, I mainly talks with Chinese. I learned Russian when I was young, so I sometimes sing songs with Russian neighbors." Even though the apartment was a diverse community, Ms. Wong only stayed with the same group that she could communicate with. She ended up with people who spoke a language that she already knew. Mr. Kuo also mentioned: "my friends are Chinese or Taiwanese because I go to the Chinese church." Mr. Lin also stated that he did not have English-speaking friends except English teachers at PCCC. Three out of four student participants communicated almost exclusively in Chinese outside of the ESL classrooms.

Older adult immigrants might have a social network mostly within their family setting (either speak English or not). Ms. Chen seemed to have ample opportunities to use English within her family setting. Her husband, stepchildren, and the international students spoke English. Ms. Chen spoke only English at home. She told me that her husband did not want her to study English at PCCC because "everybody speaks Chinese there." Ms. Wong also spoke English with her granddaughter. However, the participants who spoke English with family members still had limited opportunities communicating with English speakers outside of the family setting.

d) Isolation from the Mainstream Community

Compared to younger immigrants, the participants were isolated from the mainstream community. One of the main reasons was the language barrier. According to various studies, language is the main barrier for immigrants who are either minimum wage laborers or professional elites (Olsen, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 1990; Zhou, 1992). English was a barrier for these student immigrants and stopped them from moving into the mainstream community. The participants did not speak much English, so they had very limited opportunities for exposure to the mainstream community through media or their daily social environment. For example, Mr. Lin talked about how he liked watching the news. However, he mostly watched the news everyday in Chinese which mainly covered events in China or Taiwan.

For example Jeff explains that: About a month or two ago, there were six people shot in a café in the university district. I found out at noon (on the day of the shooting). However, the next day I came into class and none of my students knew about the shooting. It was peculiar because it was all over the news…everyone here was so scared about the shooter because he hasn't been apprehended yet. The students really didn't know anything about it.

In Jeff's class (around 10-15 students), none of the students knew about this incident. Therefore, it was clear that a majority of the students in the program rarely watched news in English.

The participants can learn about news from community Chinese newspapers. The 2012 U.S. general election took place during my observation period, and many students expressed worries about the result of the election. They felt the result might make an impact on their chance to naturalize. Even though they did not watch much English news, they still were talking about the election. In addition, they were familiar with issues such as social welfare change and medical reforms. Students still can receive information from other Chinese-speaking immigrants or Chinese community newspapers.

Isolation from the mainstream community was mostly because of the language barrier, especially for participants who did not attend work or school settings in the U.S. This was explained by Mr. Kuo, who did not have any friends who were English speakers. In his church, about half of the people were Chinese speakers and the other half were English speakers. The church encouraged the Chinese speakers to interact with the English speakers, but Mr. Kuo usually socialized with other Chinese speakers. He was afraid of speaking English, but he knew that practicing English was important. His wife worked at a college cafeteria, and she spoke English at work. She progressed more quickly than Mr. Kuo did. Mr. Kuo even mentioned that, "I still want to reach out and make friends, but there are not so many opportunities." It is clear that Mr. Kuo wanted to reach out and there were opportunities, for example, at the church setting. He did not reach out because he was afraid of speaking English. In contrast, his wife who worked in a cafeteria at a community college had to use English with her co-workers and she showed more progress. Furthermore, Mr. Kuo was not pressured to reach out to other ethnic groups. In contrast, immigrants in work and school settings had to reach out to other ethnic groups to survive. The settings were crucial to the participants. Immigrants in school and work settings might have to work closely with native English speakers. In contrast, in church or community

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center settings, there are fewer incentives to reach out and speak English. As Peirce (1995) summarizes, language learning cannot be separated from the social context. It is important to distinguish the amount of access to English speakers with various social settings. This study argues that in social settings in which students are required to learn and use English, the students might progress more quickly and effectively than students in certain social settings in which they have access to English speakers but fail to utilize the use of English.

e) Keeping their Own I dentities

Based on my observations, many older adult Chinese students keep on their own identities. For many Chinese-speaking immigrants, their names were written incorrectly on their Green Cards. Most Chinese names have three words usually one word for the last name and two words for first name. However, when they entered the U.S., the second word of their first name usually became their middle name. Older adult immigrants asked their teachers about how to change their names back because they did not want a middle name. In addition, immigrants have the option of changing their names on the Naturalization Certificate. Based on my observations, older adult students did not want to change their names. On the contrary, younger students often requested the procedure on how to change to an Anglophone first name, so their co-workers or friends could remember their names. Older adults might have fewer incentives to change their first name because they have fewer opportunities to communicate with English speakers. It responds to Norton's investment model in that identities cannot be understood without the social context. Both examples showed that older adult Chinese immigrants valued their Chinese names and identities.

f) Chinese and Taiwanese Identities in ESL Learning

Unlike the generation of their children, older adult immigrants from China did not study English in their youth. Ms. Wong studied Russian when she was in school. She began her study of English after arriving in the U.S. Because of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and other political movements, the participants from China did not learn English in K-12 settings. In fact, based on my conversation with students in the naturalization program, simply speaking English during that period might have been considered "anti-revolutionary" and resulted in being sent to a labor camp. As a result, most of the older students from China came to the U.S. without any English comprehension.

On the other hand, immigrants from Taiwan usually attended English class at middle school. Mr. Kuo studied English during secondary school in Taiwan. According to Mr. Kuo, the English lessons focused heavily on reading and writing, and he did not have opportunities to communicate with classmates in English during the class. After he came to the U.S., he forgot most of the language and felt he had to start from the beginning. However, based on my classroom observation, students from Taiwan had a better grasp of reading and writing English comprehension. Their primary English education that took place many years ago may have contributed to their success.

g) Cantonese and Mandarin-Speaking Identities in ESL Learning

Most early immigrants to the U.S. were from Canton and spoke Cantonese as their first language (Zhou, 1992). At PCCC, about half of the students in the program were Cantonese speakers who were mostly from the Canton province. According to Ms. Wong, who was the only Cantonese speaker in this research study, Cantonese speakers had a harder time pronouncing English. She told me that her friends who were from Canton had a lower English proficiency than people from other parts of China. Based on the informal conversations with the students in the program, there were several other Cantonese speakers, who had similar opinions. Based on my observations, many Cantonese speakers had more difficulty learning English. Indeed, language learning happens in social contexts. Social factors cannot be overlooked for successful language learning (Norton, 1995). The main reason might be that the instructions are mostly in English and Mandarin. Cantonese speakers might have a harder time following and understanding the instructions. Classes that are bilingual in English and Cantonese could be a solution. In addition, previous education level could be another factor. Based on my observations, Mandarin speakers had higher previous education levels than Cantonese speakers. However, previous education level did not mean better English comprehension because ESL education was not allowed during the older adult Chinese immigrants' primary education days.

The difference between proficiency levels could be more than English comprehension. Mr. Lin, who was a Mandarin speaker, expressed that Cantonese speakers had a much harder time with pronunciation. He also stated that Cantonese speakers "have bad manners in the classroom; they like chatting during the class." Mandarin and Cantonese speakers formed different groups. Language identities can divide into different sub-groups among Chinese-speaking immigrants.

h) Political Identities

Communist identity: Political identities can hinder Chinese immigrants from feeling accepted in the U.S. and from the beginning of the naturalization procedure. On the naturalization form, there was a question which asking: "are you a member of a communist party?" which is listed along side with "are you a member of a terrorist organization?" All three Chinese participants did not identify themselves as members of the communist

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party. However, because China is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party, I observed that some Chinese participants felt that Chinese nationals are not welcome in the U.S. because of the question on the naturalization form.

On the other hand, The Chinese Cultural Revolution had a very deep impact on Chinese immigrants, and it influenced some participants' decision to leave China. This event affected their ESL learning and their decision to naturalize. Macfarquhar and Schoenhals (2006) stated that "The Cultural Revolution which lasted from May 1966 to October 1976 was responsible for the most severe setback and the heaviest losses suffered by the Party, the state and the people since the founding of the People's Republic" (Macfarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006, p.3). During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, people were persecuted for various reasons. Ms. Chen talked about how she wanted to come to the U.S. because her father was killed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. She talked about her father and how she was affected by the tragedy of losing her father. She states: "I didn't know what happened to my father for a long time. In the end, I got my father's files …He was anti-revolutionary." What happened in China made her want to come to the U.S. because America is a free country. One of the reasons that Ms. Chen came to the U.S. and naturalized was because of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. This event made her distance herself from China and the Chinese government.

Mr. Lin and Ms. Wong also experienced the Chinese Cultural Revolution. However, both participants did not answer my interview questions related to politics or the Chinese Cultural Revolution. According to Mr. Lin, his school only taught Russian and did not teach English. As a result, he faced a language barrier after coming to the U.S. Ms. Wong told me that she would not like to have any contacts with any political party in China or America.

Both participants' political identities might hinder them in trusting the government or participating in political activities, such as voting or running for office. During the interviews, two participants asked me if I would give the information from my research data collection to the immigration office. Their suspicions might be from their experiences in China. In fact, based on the interviews with the participants, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Chinese people were forced to spy on their neighbors and tip off any suspicious information to the authorities. The participants could have been worried that similar things happen in the U.S. I assured my participants several times that I would never leak the information to my supervisor at the center or to the immigration office. The Chinese Cultural Revolution made older adult Chinese immigrants distrust the government and each other. They might feel that anyone can leak their personal information to the government, and that the government would use the information against them. In the end, these immigrants might only want to mind their own business. Their attitude might hinder them in reaching out to Chinese or non-Chinese ethnic groups.

Racial and cultural identity: These participants have had the experience of being discriminated against because of their English comprehension, immigrant status, or nationality. Ms. Wong described her inability to communicate with the apartment manager, and how the manager asked her to move out because she stayed at her daughter's apartment too often. Ms. Wong thought that the manager did this because she does not speak English. Ms. Wong felt that some American neighbors in her apartment did not like immigrants because "they think we use their space at the apartment!"Ms. Chen's husband rented rooms in their home out to international students, mostly from China and Japan. According to Ms. Chen, her husband treated Japanese students better than Chinese students. Her husband fought in World War II in Japan, spoke Japanese and believed that Japanese students were better behaved. She felt upset and sometimes fought with her husband. She said that all of the students in the house should be treated the same. These experiences of the students might hinder them from reaching out to other ethnic groups.

On the other hand, some participants might also be biased towards other races and nationalities. Several participants defined Americans as White and native English speakers. With this definition, they excluded themselves as Americans. Every time a student passed or failed the citizenship test, he or she often came back to the center and shared their experience with other classmates. Their classmates always asked them the question; "what does the interview officer look like?" Based on my interviews and observations, many students believed that the interviewers' race and nationality made a difference on their test results. They did not want to meet non-White officials, including Asians. Mr. Kuo claimed that Asian officials had to be strict because "they have to deal with racism themselves." Our students felt that "American" officers were the nicest ones and many students at the center hoped to have an "American" officer. In my opinion, this phenomenon showed that the participants were very isolated from the mainstream community. Without participating in today's diverse populations within school or work settings, they could only learn the information from other Chinese speaking immigrants, and many of them still had very narrow views towards other races and ethnic groups.

Student and classmate identity: The classroom was an important social setting for the participants in this study. Students cared about their relationships with other students and the teachers. They were making new friends and forming new connections in the classroom.

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Students showed interest in the teachers by talking among themselves about their teachers and making comments about them. When they talked about Larry, Ms. Chen stated: "Larry did very well. He understands us all. He works very well; Larry's Chinese is pretty good and can communicate with us." Ms. Chen's comments showed she appreciated that teachers can communicate with her in Chinese. Mr. Lin also stated: "Larry really wants us succeed; his pronunciation was like a TV anchor. Every syllable was so clear. I will always remember Larry- the American teacher who taught us English." Mr. Lin's comments showed that he praised Larry for his passion in teaching and English pronunciation. The teacher was often the first English speaker whom the participants communicated with in depth. The students were often very excited about practicing English with the teacher. It was through the English teacher that many students saw the U.S. beyond the Chinese community.

The participants treated their teachers liked family members or friends. They showed their respect to the teachers by giving them gifts, mostly food items, but sometimes they also gave a necklace or other more valuable items. Jeff stated that his students occasionally gave him small food items. Sometimes students asked their teachers to go out for lunch or invited the teachers to their homes. Compared with the younger generation, the older adult students at the center tried to maintain a close relationship with their teachers.

The participants tried to give feedback to their teachers to improve their class. Some students would ask their teachers to speak Chinese. They liked to communicate freely with the teachers and asked them questions anytime they wanted. In fact, they eagerly gave feedback and Jeff mentioned that sometimes he could not hear his own voice because many of the students would speak at the same time. Compared to the stereotypical Asian students who were categorized as quiet and passive (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009), the students at the center were certainly the opposite. One of the reasons might be the students' ages. The students were usually much older than the teachers, and the teachers usually called their students by last name, for example, Mr. Wang. On the contrary, students usually called their teachers by their first names. Mr. Lin stated that one of his teachers was the same age as his grandson. He said: "He is like my grandchild, but he is playing the role as my teacher." The participants might treat their teachers like family members and feel the teachers were like their sons and daughters. Therefore, compared to traditional age students, this population might be more willingly to communicate with their teachers beyond ESL or citizenship classes.

Teachers might need to be more patient with this population. In addition, they should be firm with the students in discipline and focused on their lesson plans. Students might ask irrelevant questions during class and demand answers immediately. Indeed, the class might easily become disoriented and it is up to the teachers to bring the focus back to the subject. Older adult students might have behavior problems similar to teenager students. I found that it was quite often the students talked on the phone, chatted, or even argued with classmates during class.

Student participants had multiple identities in the ESL classroom. They were much older than their ESL teachers, and aside from being students, their identities in the classroom often simulated being family members. Their real family members might be too busy to spend time with them. Therefore, the participants' relationships with their teachers were important to them. They considered the teachers to be their family members, and they took care of the teachers by giving feedback, advice, and sometimes gifts such as food items to show their appreciation.

For older adults, socializing with other students might be as important as their ESL learning. Students were guessing and trying to understand what the teacher said by code switching between Chinese and English to help each other. The students asked and gave advice to each other quite often in Chinese, while the teacher talked in English. According to Jeff, part of the difficulties in teaching this group was that students would talk among themselves and it was hard to ask them to be quiet. However, Jeff admitted that it might be beneficial to the students because they clearly talked about the naturalization content. Based on my observations, the students in the center were interacting with each other frequently in the classroom, which included correcting others' mistakes or giving others hints about answers. Research shows that when people grow older, the social relationship functions shift away from informational purposes toward emotional regulatory functions (Cartensen, Isaacowitz, &Charles, 1999, as citied at Mast, Zimmerman, and Rowe, 2009). I noticed that students chatted with each other after class quite often. Compared with younger students, I sense that older adult students think the classroom is a place for learning as well as a place for social interaction. Among the participants I observed, I found them to be friends who took the test together. The classroom was perhaps both the main and only setting where they socialized with both Chinese and English speakers.

In the political perspective, the nationality of the participants was a factor in their commitment to naturalization and influenced their experience living in the U.S. In looking at language perspective, the first language of the participants was found to possibly influence their ESL learning. Cantonese-speaking students might be more vulnerable to mistakes and need more attention from researchers and educators. In the classroom perspective, participants' identities as students and classmates made their ESL learning different from traditionally aged ESL students. The

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participants' close relationships with teachers and other classmates made the classroom possibly the most important social setting in their daily lives.

IV. Discussion

In contrast to the previous studies (Peirce, 1995; McKay & Wong, 1996), the participants of this study have been greatly influenced by their political identity. One reason might be that the participants of this study are much older than the participants of the previous studies. According to the investment model, the learners' identities can be multiple and contradictory, and this often relates to their ESL learning. In many ways, their political identities can be very complex and contradictory. They might want to be distant from their Chinese identity but at the same time are insecure about their immigrant identity. Their political identities might lead them to the U.S., but at the same time hinder them from learning English. Some students might feel insecure about their political identities. After coming to the U.S., their political identity as a citizen of a communist country might hinder them from learning English and participating in the mainstream culture. For example, a student at the center did not want to naturalize because she was a member of the Communist Party. She was afraid that if the immigration officer found out about her identity, her son might not be able to naturalize.

Students at PCCC may rather separate themselves from non-Chinese communities because of their political identities. Even though it is important for this population to reach out to other ethnic groups, it is equally important for people in the mainstream community to understand this population and their identities in return. The government might be able to make some changes to facilitate this process. For example, USCIS should explain clearly how a current or former member of a Communist Party can naturalize. The form currently only asks if the applicant is a member of Communist Party but does not offer any clarification on the consequence of the naturalization decision, especially in the case of China, where many have to join the party for certain occupations. Recognizing the insecurity issue is likely to be the first step for the participants to branch out.

The participants' insecurity about their political identities and trust issues might have an impact on this research and participating in political activities in the U.S. Chinese immigrants may be hesitant to answer questions regarding political issues. When Ms. Wong and Ms. Chen did not pass the interview, they asked me if I reported their learning situation and daily life activities to the immigration office. After I assured them that I did not say anything to the immigration office, they did not raise the issue again, but I felt they were not willing to share about their learning experience and opinions with me anymore. Based on the political and cultural factors they lived within China, it was not hard to imagine why they worried about this issue. As a result, it might affect their social identities in the U.S. For example, they might not trust the government about their personal information. In addition, they might feel insecure with participating in any political activities in the U.S. Therefore, the multiple identities of Chinese immigrants can be contradictory. For example, they want to become U.S. citizens but at the same time they do not trust the U.S. government or feel accepted in U.S. society.

Both Taiwanese and Chinese immigrants share the same first language, but they are quite different in terms of political identities. For instance, Taiwanese political identity is more or less in line with the U.S. political identity in that both countries are traditionally anti-Communist. Therefore, even though there are language barrier issues, it is still quite comfortable for Taiwanese immigrants to adapt to the political situation here. In contrast, the Chinese political identity is at odds with the U.S. political identity in terms of the view toward the Communist Party. In addition to the language barrier, Chinese participants also have to cope with a significantly different political atmosphere in the U.S. During the interview, when I asked the four Chinese participants their political affiliations, they made it very clear that they had never joined the Communist Party. They also expressed the fear of being perceived as members of the Community Party. One Chinese student at PCCC who had joined the party for occupational reasons asked me to keep the fact a secret from other students. It shows that even the most isolated Chinese immigrants can still sense the anti-Communist political atmosphere in the U.S., and the members of the Communist Party feel ashamed about their political identity in the U.S.

Even though being a member of the Communist Party is an honor in China, it can easily become a source of shame in the United States. According to Peirce (1995), the learners and their social network and power structure cannot be separated. This population, especially the former communist members, clearly experienced a social status downturn when they came to the U.S. Therefore, Chinese immigrants might experience great cultural and political shifts after moving to the U.S. On the other hand, many Chinese immigrants move to the U.S. and naturalize because they want to get away from the Chinese political situation. The past political movements in China made them distance themselves from the Chinese government. They wanted to come to the U.S. to have a new political identity. In a way, they naturalize in order to gain a new political identity and to remove their previous political identity.

Different political policies also influence Chinese-speaking immigrants' national identities. Chinese immigrants are required to give up Chinese

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citizenship after they naturalize. On the contrary, Taiwanese immigrants are allowed to have dual citizenship. Therefore, students who have more incentive to keep their Chinese citizenship might have less incentive to naturalize. This includes people who receive pensions from the Chinese government or immigrants who had business in China. In addition, people who have family members in China might also not naturalize. However, if their family members want to move to the U.S., it is a strong incentive for immigrants to naturalize because of the Family Unification Act. In contrast, Taiwanese immigrants might intend to naturalize without these considerations because they do not have to worry about losing their identities as Taiwanese citizens or being denied entrance to Taiwan. Therefore, national identity is a factor regarding participants' investment in English or the decision to naturalize.

In addition, political identity and isolation are likely to be related. Chinese immigrants are required to give up their Chinese citizenship once they naturalize. Chinese learners may viewboth Chinese and American identitiesto be mutually exclusive. Chinese learners might be torn between the two countries. They might choose their Chinese identity and not acknowledge their American identity or try to integrate into the mainstream society.

Based on my observations, Chinese participants are careful and reserved about their opinions regarding theU.S. government. An issue of trust still exists. For many Chinese immigrants, the government is source of fear. For example, they are worried that saying the wrong thing might get them into trouble. Many Chinese immigrants are not interested in participating in politics in the U.S. They feel powerless and they cannot change their own situation by voting. Therefore, PCCC can promote civil rights during class. Citizenship class should not only be a test of English comprehension, but also a means to promote immigrants' political rights. The literature has seldom mentioned the participants' political identities in ESL learning, but this research shows that participants' political identity and their investment in English are often related.

The teachers are also required to accommodate Mandarin and Cantonese speakers. In many situations, both populations study English in the same classroom. However, the teacher usually speaks Mandarin and English. Therefore, Cantonese speakers can progress more slowly than Mandarin speakers because they learn English through another second language (Mandarin). Some teachers might assume all students speak Mandarin. However, many Cantonese speakers can hold conversation-level Mandarin, but still have difficulty learning English through Mandarin.

Pre-existing education inequalities might be another issue. Most Mandarin immigrants come to the U.S. through occupational opportunities. Therefore, most older Mandarin adult speakers came to the U.S. because their children are working in the U.S. Older adult Mandarin speakers usually have high socioeconomic status and high academic achievement, which is how they could afford to send their children abroad. On the other hand, Cantonese immigrants began immigrating to the U.S.in the mid-nineteenth century. Most Cantonese speakers came to the U.S. through their family members and they did not necessarily have high economic status or high academic achievement. Therefore, most Cantonese speakers are likely to have more learning obstacles than the Mandarin speakers.

In summary, among Chinese-speaking immigrants, a Mandarin speaker's identity can be very different from a Cantonese speaker's identity in ESL learning. The first step to improve the ESL teaching in the classroom is to recognize the different identity of each individual. Furthermore, curriculum design can be based on the different learning needs. For example, PCCC can offer a special beginning class to students who do not speak Mandarin and have not learned English before they came into the program.

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