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A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE IDENTITY AND ENGLISH
LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between foreign language learning and culture identity has been described as a major breakthrough in the field of English learning in the 20th century. Postnatal surroundings, especially family background, appear to be very influential for English learning. After interviewing with 2 students, and especially doing some survey researches about family background of them, the author finds that the relationship between culture identity and English learning experiences is quite close. Language reflects not only its culture but also the ways of understanding the relationship to the world. Through foreign language learning, one's culture identity will definitely undergo changes, including additive changes and subtractive changes. We say the ideal state is that both changes could cooperate one day. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the relationship between culture identity and English learning experiences.

Key words: Culture identity Family background English learning experiences Relationship

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

It is a common sense in linguistic field that language constructs and is constructed by identities. Since the new century, belief studies in second language (L2 in short) field have turned to a new trend that involves sociocultural theories in relevant research. Language is not only a tool of communication, but also contains culture. During the process of learning a foreign language, learners may acquire its culture and thinking mode unconsciously. Therefore, the importance of foreign language learning means to obtain a practical tool as well as a change of the cultural value, lifestyle, even self-identity.

Identity is not a simple concept. It is widely used in different fields, such as philosophy, psychology, mathematics, sociology as well as linguistics. The factors, including parents' cultural identity, family background and family cultural atmosphere, play an important role in students' English learning beliefs, attitudes and methods; meanwhile, family culture identity changes through English learning experiences. Thus, interest in culture identity and foreign language learning has been growing in recent years.

Tajfel (1982) and Giles and Coupland (1991), and many other second language acquisition (SLA in short) scholars in different parts of the world have offered significant insights into the relationship between culture

identity and foreign language learning experiences. In spite of the growing researches over the last ten years, there have yet been adequate.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to enrich related researches on learners' culture identity changes through English learning experiences, thus give more hints to the direction of English education system. Specifically, this research aims at understanding students' English learning process from a sociocultural perspective and elaborating the reasons within the sociocultural framework.

1.3 Significance of the Study

Although more and more domestic scholars in SLA have started to care about students' identity changes in recent ten years, till now few researches come out on the influence of culture identity under different English learning experiences.

This study has both theoretical and practical significance. For the former, it refers that the results will be helpful to enrich social identity theories; and the latter means we can work out solutions to what exists in the traditional English education system on the basis of data analysis.

1.4 Structure of the study

The thesis comprises five chapters. Chapter One gives a general introduction about the research background, research purpose and research significance. Chapter Two is the literature review about the related studies concerning the definition of culture identity, and the relationship between culture identity and L2 Learning. Chapter Three focuses on the methodologies of the study, which includes research questions and research design, in which there is the subject, the instrument, the implement of this survey and the data collection. Chapter Four provides data analysis and discussion, where examples are presented. Chapter five is the conclusion of the study, containing major findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of culture identity

Culture identity, "is the identity or feeling of belonging to a group. It is part of a person's self-conception and self-perception and is related to nationality, ethnicity, religion, social class, generation, locality or any kind of social group that has its own distinct culture. In this way, cultural identity is both characteristic of the individual but also of the culturally identical group of members sharing the same cultural identity" (wikipedia).

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (Mark Boyer et al., 1985), family refers to "a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of a man and woman and their offspring" or "two or more people who share goals and values, have long-term commitments to one another, and reside usually in the same dwelling place" (ibid:254). From the angle of sociology, family is one of the social groups in which the members cooperate intimately and live mutually on the basis of marriage, consanguinity and economic conditions.

2.2 The relationship between culture identity and English learning experiences

Lambert's (1967, 1974) social psychological model of SLA is a theory of bilingual development and culture identity modification. In Social Psychological Model, two kinds of identity change are displayed: additive and subtractive. When learners develop their proficiency in the second language with no pressure to replace or reduce the performance of their first language, it is called additive bilingualism, where two self-identities as well as two languages coexist within one learner. On the other hand, if learners feel a threat to their first language when cultural assimilation is enhanced, there would be subtractive bilingualism that triggers sense of loss of original cultural identity and results in alienation. In subtractive bilingualism, learners' first cultural identity is replaced by a new identity as they acquire the target language.

Drawing on the earlier researches (Lambert & Klineberg, 1967) on developmental aspects of bilingualism, Lambert (1974) argues, "linguistic distinctiveness is a basic component of identity" (p.79) and the importance of linguistic distinctiveness originates early in the socialization process. For example, parents initially promote this distinctiveness by making contrasts between their own and other cultural communities in order to help their children understand who they are. Thus, when individuals develop proficiency in the second language, they may begin to experience the changes of identity. Lambert states, "For the serious student who in time really masters the foreign language, we saw the possibility of a conflict of identity or alienation arising as he became skilled enough to become an accepted member of a new cultural group" (p.81).

With the increasing influence and research in studies of identity abroad, many Chinese researchers began to cover related topics in 1990s when more and more learners have taken English as a foreign language. Liu Shuang (2000) argues that learners' behaviors and language patterns in communication are strongly influenced by their culture and suggest that different cultural identities should be negotiated in order to make smooth cross-cultural communication. Likewise, Ren Jianxin (2008) examined the cultural identity of college English learners on the relationship between their cultural identity and their English proficiency with conclusion that most Chinese English learners have a bicultural identity to some extent, meanwhile, the degree of identification with the culture of target language determines their attitudes and language proficiency, that is, the stronger their identity as of English culture, the higher their achievement in English learning.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Research questions

All together three questions have been investigated in this study. They are:

- a. How the participants identified their family culture identity?
- b. How the family culture identity influenced their EFL experiences?
- c. How the family culture identity construct through EFL experiences?

3.2 Research design

It is well known that appropriate subjects selection is a major concern in a study. The subjects here are Wang Yifan, female, 25, a postgraduate student of Language and Literature in Beijing International Studies University, with 14 years' formal learning experiences in English; and Xie Mingming, female, 20, a potential student of Liberal Arts in New Jersey City University, who has been studying English for 10 years.

In this study, the author employed interviews to collect the data. To be specific, categorizing, analyzing, comparison and transcribing are applied to this study.

4. Data analysis and discussion

4.1 Additive change

"Additive phenomena" refers to foreign language learners after partially getting some access to the target language cultural identity, they greatly maintain their mother tongue and cultural affiliation, in other words, the acquisition of target language and cultural identity was not at the expense of their mother tongue and cultural ownership.

The first participant, Wang Yifan, admitted that her father preferred her to become a teacher and she agreed that stability and assurance were of great significance for a girl to choose a job. Inspired by Locke, people's ideas are derived from experience, which is very remarkable in the Chinese family. In terms of deeply rooted ethical conduct, the Chinese people are used to the type of high uncertainty-avoidance culture; try to avoid ambiguity by pursuing stability for their members, seeking consensus and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise.

Eg: Z: 可不可以简要总结一下家里的文化氛围?

Ke bu ke yi jian yao zong jie yi xia jia li de wen hua fen wei?

Can you briefly describe the cultural atmosphere?

W: 我爸妈比较喜欢说教, 因为都是老师, 总把我当孩子, 觉得他们说出来的观点是经过周全考虑的, 希望我全都听他们的话, 少走弯路, 很少考虑我的感受和意见。我爸妈比较保守, 什么都求稳。

Wo ba ma bi jiao xi huan shuo jiao, yin wei dou shi lao shi, zong ba wo dang hai zi, jue de ta men shuo chu lai de guan dian shi jing guo zhou quan kao lv de, xi wang wo quan dou ting ta men de hua, shao zou wan lu, hen shao kao lv wo de gan shou he yi jian. Wo ba ma bi jiao bao shou, shen me dou qiu wen.

My parents tend to preach, for they are both teachers, often regarding me as a child. They are conservative, believing what they have said is through comprehensive consideration, and hope I could just follow so as to avoid detours. However, they have rarely taken my feelings into account.

Z: 你觉得爸爸为什么希望你成为一个老师?

Ni jue de ba ba wei shen me xi wang ni cheng wei yi ge lao shi?

Why do you think your father wants you to become a teacher?

W: 我爸爸就觉得像我妈妈一样, 生活也不会很有压力, 女孩子么, 也不需要操很多的心, 比较管得住家庭, 在经济方面比较安稳, 可以活得比较轻松自在吧。

Wo ba ba jiu jue de xiang wo ma ma yi yang, sheng huo ye bu hui hen you ya li, nv hai zi me, ye bu xu yao cao hen duo de xin, bii jiao guan de zhu jia ting, zai jing ji fang mian bi jiao an wen, ke yi huo de bi jiao qing song zi zai ba,

My father hopes that I could live like my mum without much pressure. As a girl, balancing the family and the work is more important, especially the family. In addition, becoming a teacher can assure my economic condition to live a relatively comfortable life.

Z: 那你自己是怎么想的呢?

Na ni zi ji shi zen me xiang de ne?

What about your own opinion?

W: 我不想当老师阿, 但觉得我爸说得也有道理, 当个老师稳定、有保障, 可以更好地兼顾家, 这点对女生来说很重要。

Wo bu xiang dang lao shi a, dan jue de wo ba shuo de ye you dao li, dang ge lao shi wen ding, you bao zhang, ke yi geng hao de jian gu jia ting, zhe dian dui nv sheng lai shuo hen zhong yao.

Honestly, I don't want to be a teacher, but to some degree, I agree my dad's opinion. Being a teacher sounds stable, secure, and allows me to put more efforts into my family, which is significant and attractive for a girl.

In collective cultures, like China, always put individuals in a group and see the group as the most important of all social entities. People stress the views, needs of the group, among whose members, there are strong emotional ties and emphasize belonging to organization. Individual needs and goals, in contrast to the West, take the second place to the needs of many.

Eg: Z: 你爸爸妈妈都是教师, 可不可以分享一下他们在教育你的过程中有有一些什么样的文化理念?

Ni ba ba ma ma dou shi jiao shi, ke bu ke yi fen xiang yi xia ta men zai jiao yu ni de guo cheng zhong you yi xie shen me yang de wen hua li nian?

Since your parents are both teachers, can you share something about culture ideology in your growth?

W: ...一定要为别人着想, 以大局为重, 与别人搞好关系, 诸如此类吧。

... yi ding yao wei bie ren zhao xiang, yi da ju wei zhong, yu bie ren gao hao guan xi, zhu ru ci lei ba.

...I am supposed to think of others as much as possible, put emphasis on overall situation, get well with others, and so on.

Although Wang has been formally studying English for 14 years, the way of thinking is yet to be completely westernized, for instance, preferring integrity intuition instead of logic and analytical thinking, but it could not deny that she feels at ease with English language and western culture.

Eg: Z: 所以你认为你在组织表达语言的过程中, 是受到了本民族固有文化的影响咯?

Suo yi ni ren wei ni zai zu zhi biao da yu yan de guo cheng zhong, shi shou dao le ben min zu gu you wen hua de ying xiang lo?

So, do you think you are affected by Chinese inherent culture while organizing and expressing your ideas?

W: 对, 肯定会有, 我们中国人感觉思维比较发散, 说到哪儿是哪儿, 但是以前准备考试的时候, 老师都会让我们背句式, 像“First、Second、third、finally”这样。

Dui, ken ding hui you, wo men zhong guo ren gan jue si wei bi jiao fa san, shuo dao na er shi na er, dan shi yi qian zhun bei kao shi de shi hou, lao shi dou hui rang wo men bei ju shi, xiang “First、Second、third、finally” zhe yang.

Of course. We Chinese prefer open-ended thinking, lack of logicity. Comparatively, when we prepare for English examinations, our teachers often stress the sentence pattern, like *First、Second、third、finally*.

Z: 那经过了十多年的英语学习, 包括妈妈是英语老师的家庭氛围, 觉得自己在思维上、学习上有没有什么改变?

Na jing guo le shi duo nian de ying yu xue xi, bao kuo ma ma shi ying yu lao shi de jia ting fen wei, jue de zi ji zai si wei shang, xue xi shang you mei you shen me gai bian?

As you have learned English for more than ten years, and your mother is an English teacher as well, can you feel any changes on thinking or studies?

W: 有, 我现在觉得我爸妈太保守了, 而且什么都要帮我做决定。我觉得通过英语阅读, 对西方文化的了解加深, 自己思维上已经积极主动了很多, 比我爸妈心目中的适应能力强, 而且更能应变。

You, wo xian zai jue de wo ba ma tai bao shou le, er qie shen me dou yao bang wo zuo jue ding. Wo jue de tong guo ying yu jue du, dui xi fang wen hua de liao jie jia shen, zi ji si wei shang yi jing ji ji zhu dong le hen duo, bi wo ba ma xin mu zhong de shi ying neng li qiang, er qie geng neng ying bian,

Yes. I think my parents are too conservative and try to make every decision for me. With a good number of English reading and increasing understanding of western culture, I have become further more proactive and adaptable than my parents think.

In short, Wang is conservative in job selection and passive in communicating with foreigners. Besides, she tends to take others' feelings and thoughts into account when facing choice. Under 14-year learning of English, compared with the elder generation, she has been more willing to take the initiative and adapt to the change. It is clear to say that Chinese and English culture coexist well in the learning process for the interviewee, to some degree, she could switch easily between Chinese and English.

4.2 Subtractive change

"Subtractive phenomenon" refers to foreign language learners' native language, mother tongue and cultural identity are partially replaced by the target language and cultural identity, resulting from the cognitive and emotional conflicts caused by learning a foreign language with its culture.

Since having lived in America for 10 years, Xie has deeply got interested in the western customs, and the so-called American culture has taken root in her mind. She disagrees about Chinese society's code of conduct, which focuses on whether is socially accepted or not by the ethical standards, simply, is to tell people what to do and not do as a norm. Instead, she adore directness and simpleness; pays special attention to self's feelings and emotions.

Eg: Z: 那你觉得和外国同学相处跟和中国同学相处有没有什么不一样的地方?

Na ni jue de he wai guo tong xue xiang chu gen he zhong guo tong xue xiang chu you mei you shen me bu yi yang de di fang?

Is there any differences when getting along with your foreign classmates and Chinese ones?

X: 有, 跟外国同学相处大家都直接, 想说什么就开门见山, 但是中国同学比较委婉, 总是试图顾全所有人的感受, 常常绕了很多圈子, 我都不知道他想表达什么意思。其次, 中国同学有很多定势思维, 他们想的更多的是“应该怎么样”, 而不是“我想怎么样”。我觉得, 中国同学好像都活得特别艰苦, 永远在自习, 吃得很随便, 从来不去玩, 跟美国文化有点格格不入。

You, gen wai guo tong xue xiang chu da jia dou hen zhi jie, xiang shuo shen me jiu kai men jian shan, dan shi zhong guo tong xue bi jiao wei wan, zong shi shi tu gu quan suo you ren de gan shou, chang chang rao le hen duo quan zi, wo dou bu zhi dao ta xiang biao da shen me yi si. Qi ci, zhong guo tong xue you hen duo ding shi si wei, ta men xiang de geng duo de shi "ying gai zen me yang", er bu shi "wo xiang zen me yang". Wo jue de, zhong guo tong xue hao xiang huo de te bie jian ku, yong yuan zai zi xi, chi de hen sui bian, cong lai bu chu qu wan, gen mei guo wen hua you dian ge ge bu ru.

Yes. Along with my foreign classmates, we are "straight", I mean, come straight to the point. Whereas, Chinese classmates express euphemistically, trying to care everyone's feelings. I am often confused, because they talk in circles. Besides, my Chinese classmates can hardly break their thinking set, always paying attention to "what they should do" rather than "what they want to do". From my point of view, my Chinese classmates seem to live a tough life, getting up earlier than cock, work harder than cattle and eat worse than pigs. Wholly alien to American culture.

Like most Americans, she believes that each person has his/ her own separate identity, and all values originate in individuals. In America, they tend to think the uniqueness of each individual is of paramount value. In addition, a major reward for hard work can never be neglected. One of the most important American values is leisure, which is something they have earned as well. Also, they have been taught competition from early childhood, which challenges them to become even better. Undoubtedly, Xie likes and internalizes this type of orientation.

Z: 那你心目中的美国文化是怎么样的呢?

Na ni xin mu zhong de mei guo wen hua shi zen me yang de ne?

What's the so-called *American culture* in your mind?

X: 强调 Individualism, 每个人都不一样, 没必要什么都跟着别人来; 大部分人愿意接受改变, 相信未来一定会更好, 能很积极地应对竞争; 最重要的是, 美国人会玩, 小到每天, 大到每年, 一定有固定单位的时间是用来享受生活的。

Qiang diao Individualism, mei ge ren dou bu yi yang, mei bi yao shen me dou gen zhe bie ren lai, da bu fen ren yuan yi jie shou gai bian, xiang xin wei lai yi ding hui geng hao, neng hen ji ji de ying dui jing zheng; zui zhong yao de shi, mei guo ren hui wan, xiao dao mei tian, da dao mei nian, yi ding you gu ding dan wei de shi jian shi yong lai xiang shou sheng huo de.

Firstly, respect and emphasize *Individualism*. Everyone is unique and there is no need to follow others. The great majority are willing to change, to fight for the promising future. Most importantly, Americans never ignore to enjoy themselves. Whether a day or a year, they arrange certain part of time to enjoy lifes.

With such belief, in her eyes, Americans are optimistic and receptive to change, emphasis on the future rather than the past, faith in an ability to control their own life. A passion for progress cultivates not only the acceptance of change but also the conviction that changes move in a definite direction, more importantly, the direction is good. The key is to stress activity and action

Eg: Z: 你觉得这些文化理念或者教育方式对你的学习, 特别是英语学习有没有什么影响?

Ni jue de zhe xie wen hua li nian huo zhe jiao yu fang shi dui ni de xue xi, te bie shi ying yu xue xi you mei you shen me ying xiang?

Do you think this type of cultural concept or educational method has any impact on your study, especially your English study?

X: 当然, 我爸妈经常鼓励我不要怕犯错, 语言就是表达的一种工具, 我爸会跟我分享他刚来美国的时候说英语闹过什么笑话。我受我妈影响更大, 我觉得我挺乐观的, 就觉得自己的英语今天比昨天好, 明天还会比今天好, 现在我想跟 native 差别不大了吧。

Dang ran, wo ba ma jing chang gu li wo bu yao pa fan cuo, yu yan jiu shi biao da de yi zhong gong ju, wo ba hui gen wo fen xiang ta gang lai mei guo de shi hou shuo ying yu nao guo shen me xiao hua. Wo shou wo ma ying xiang geng da, wo jue de wo ting le guan de, jiu jue de zi ji de ying yu jin tian bi zuo tian hao, ming tian hai hui bi jin tian hao, xian zai wo xiang gen native cha bie bu da le ba.

Certainly. My parents often encourage me to open my mouth, never afraid to make mistakes. Language is a tool to express ourselves. My father would even share with me his experiences, sometimes jokes, when he come to America in the very beginning. As for me, my mum produces a greater influence on me. She helps me to keep optimistic and believe my English is getting better and better. I think I am a 99% native speaker.

Through interviewing, Xie showed great independence, as she said, America rewards individual achievement and individual decision making. In American society, they are encouraged to be tolerant of the unusual, and willing to take risks. What's more, she ranks low on the long-term orientation; instead, expresses concern about short-term results, and prefers to seek quick gratification of her needs.

Eg: Z: 你在美国待了 10 年之后觉得自己有没有什么地方改变了?

Ni zai mei guo dai le 10 nian zhi hou jue de zi ji you mei you shen me di fang gai bian le?

Can you feel any difference about yourself after living in America for 10 years?

X: 我觉得自己变化挺大的, 比较独立, 像申请学校这样的事情都是自己在处理, 反正综合考虑过利弊之后, 觉得自己能承担, 就去做, 很少后悔。不像中国很多“五年计划”, 我不会规定自己五年之后必须成为什么, 十年之内必须达到什么目标, 我的想法更多是短期的, 这个月想学烹, 下个月想去加拿大, 这种。

Wo jue de zi ji bian hua ting da de, bi jiao du li, xiang shen qing xue xiao zhe yang de shi qing dou shi zi ji zai chu li, fan zheng zong he kao lv guo li bi zhi hou, jue de zi ji neng cheng dan, jiu qu zuo, hen shao hou hui. Bu xiang zhong guo hen duo “wu nian ji hua”, wo bu hui gui ding zi ji wu nian zhi hou bi xu cheng wei shen me, shi nian zhi nei bi xu da dao shen me mu biao, wo de xiang fa geng duo shi duan qi de, zhe ge yue xiang xue peng ren, xia ge yue xiang qu jia na da, zhe yang.

Quite a lot. I become much more independent. I can handle big decisions, such as apply for a degree, on my own. Weighing pros and cons, as long as I can undertake the result, I will go ahead. In my life, there is no regret. Unlike my Chinese friends, they have something like “Five-year Plan”. I can’t understand it. I don’t like to set such goals like “What I should become within five years”.

Instead, I prefer short-term planning, for example, I’d like to have a cooking lesson this month, or I prepare to go to Canada next month.

To sum up, although Xie is a Chinese, after receiving 10-year education in America, she adores directness and simpleness; attaches great importance to individual’s rights and tends to think the individual is the single most important unit in any social setting. Having lived in such a future-oriented society, she tries to control her own life, and is optimistic about the future to be greater than the present. She pursues competition, willing to work hard and take risks; meanwhile, she values leisure and quick gratification as well. We can hardly see shyness, conservatism, indecisiveness on such a 20-year-old girl.

5. Conclusion

Language is the principle medium through which we manage our lives and constructs an important part of our sense of who we are --our culture identity. People’s identities may be linguistically constructed both through the use of a particular language and communicative practices of their community. Language is a system of signs closely associated with culture in multiple and complex ways. Language and communication often provide criteria by which members both define their group and are defined by others.

In light of Sociocultural Theory, second language learning has been viewed as the process of identity-translation mediated by the target language. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Hu, 2002) suggests that language would mould our way of thinking and different languages may probably express their unique way of perceiving and conceiving the world. Overall, language reflects not only its culture but also the ways of understanding the relationship to the world. Through foreign language learning, one’s culture identity also undergoes changes.

In this study, the author holds the notion that changes including additive changes and subtractive changes both belong to one’s changes of cultural identity, which can exist at the same time and transmute into each other along with the English learning experiences. We say the ideal change is that both changes could cooperate one day, as they are helpful for language learners to deal with their two different identities: Native identity and target identity.

In short, acquiring knowledge and abilities is a dynamic process, during which the learners are exposed to the culture identity. “As the foreign language of English learning” can be regarded as an independent “field” between macro social contexts and individual learners (Bourdieu, 1991). Culture identity and English learning experiences are interactive.

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Appendix:

Interview with Wang Yifan

(female, 25)

Setting: In a classroom

Length of Time: 20 minutes

Note: The interviewee is a student of Language and Literature, who has been formally studying English for 14 years.

Zhang Yichao: Z Wang Yifan: W

Z: 你爸爸妈妈都是教师，可不可以分享一下他们在教育你的过程中有的一些什么样的文化理念？

Ni ba ba ma ma dou shi jiao shi, ke bu ke yi fen xiang yi xia ta men zai jiao yu ni de guo cheng zhong you yi xie shen me yang de wen hua li nian?

Since your parents are both teachers, can you share something about culture ideology in your growth?

W: 一定要为别人着想，以大局为重，与别人搞好关系，诸如此类吧。

... yi ding yao wei bie ren zhao xiang, yi da ju wei zhong, yu bie ren gao hao guan xi, zhu ru ci lei ba.

...I am supposed to think of others as much as possible, put emphasis on overall situation, get well with others, and so on.

Z: 可不可以简要总结一下家里的文化氛围？

Ke bu ke yi jian yao zong jie yi xia jia li de wen hua fen wei?

Can you briefly describe the cultural atmosphere?

W: 我爸妈比较喜欢说教，因为都是老师，总把我当孩子，觉得他们说出来的观点是经过周全考虑的，希望我全都听他们的话，少走弯路，很少考虑我的感受和意见。我爸妈比较保守，什么都求稳。

Wo ba ma bi jiao xi huan shuo jiao, yin wei dou shi lao shi, zong ba wo dang hai zi, jue de ta men shuo chu lai de guan dian shi jing guo zhou quan kao lv de, xi wang wo quan dou ting ta men de hua, shao zou wan lu, hen shao kao lv wo de gan shou he yi jian. Wo ba ma bi jiao bao shou, shen me dou qiu wen.

My parents tend to preach, for they are both teachers, often regarding me as a child. They are conservative, believing what they have said is through comprehensive consideration, and hope I could just follow so as to avoid detours. However, they have rarely taken my feelings into account.

Z: 你觉得这些文化理念或者教育方式对你的学习，特别是英语学习有没有什么影响？

Ni jue de zhe xie wen hua li nian huo zhe jiao yu fang shi dui ni de xue xi, te bie shi ying yu xue xi you mei you shen me ying xiang?

Do you think this type of cultural concept or educational method has any impact on your study, especially your English study?

W: 这个肯定会有, 他们就要求我能耐劳苦, 遇到难理解的课文, 既然老师布置了, 那就一定要完成嘛, 毕竟我们是学生, 要听老师的。

Zhe ge ken ding hui you, ta men jiu you qiu wo neng nai lao ku, yu dao nan li jie de ke wen, ji ran lao shi bu zhi le, na jiu yi ding yao wan cheng ma, bi jing wo men shi xue sheng, yao ting lao shi de.

Sure. My parents ask me to be hardworking. If our teacher assigns some homework, no matter how difficult it is, I am supposed to follow it and complete it.

Z: 你觉得爸爸为什么希望你成为一个老师?

Ni jue de ba ba wei shen me xi wang ni cheng wei yi ge lao shi?

Why do you think your father wants you to become a teacher?

W: 我爸爸就觉得像我妈妈一样, 生活也不会很有压力, 女孩子么, 也不需要操很多的心, 比较管的住家庭, 在经济方面比较安稳, 可以活得比较轻松自在吧。

Wo ba ba jiu jue de xiang wo ma ma yi yang, sheng huo ye bu hui hen you ya li, nv hai zi me, ye bu xu yao cao hen duo de xin, bii jiao guan de zhu jia ting, zai jing ji fang mian bi jiao an wen, ke yi huo de bi jiao qing song zi zai ba,

My father hopes that I could live like my mum without much pressure. As a girl, balancing the family and the work is more important, especially the family. In addition, becoming a teacher can assure my economic condition to live a relatively comfortable life.

Z: 那你自己是怎么想的呢?

Na ni zi ji shi zen me xiang de ne?

What about your own opinion?

W: 我不想当老师阿, 但觉得我爸说得也有道理, 当个老师稳定、有保障, 可以更好地兼顾家庭, 这点对女生来说很重要。

Wo bu xiang dang lao shi a, dan jue de wo ba shuo de ye you dao li, dang ge lao shi wen ding, you bao zhang, ke yi geng hao de jian gu jia ting, zhe dian dui nv sheng lai shuo hen zhong yao.

Honestly, I don't want to be a teacher, but to some degree, I agree my dad's opinion. Being a teacher sounds stable, secure, and allows me to put more efforts into my family, which is significant and attractive for a girl.

Z: 所以你认为你在组织表达语言的过程中, 是受到了本民族固有文化的影响咯?

Suo yi ni ren wei ni zai zu zhi biao da yu yan de guo cheng zhong, shi shou dao le ben min zu gu you wen hua de ying xiang lo?

So, do you think you are affected by Chinese inherent culture while organizing and expressing your ideas?

W: 对, 肯定会有, 我们中国人感觉思维比较发散, 说到哪儿是哪儿, 但是以前准备考试的时候, 老师都会让我们背句式, 像 First、Second、third、finally 这样。

Dui, ken ding hui you, wo men zhong guo ren gan jue si wei bi jiao fa san, shuo dao na er shi na er, dan shi yi qian zhun bei kao shi de shi hou, lao shi dou hui rang wo men bei ju shi, xiang "First、Second、third、finally" zhe yang.

Of course. We Chinese prefer open-ended thinking, lack of logicity. Comparatively, when we prepare for English examinations, our teachers often stress the sentence pattern, like *First、Second、third、finally*.

Z: 那经过了十多年的英语学习, 包括妈妈是英语老师的家庭氛围, 觉得自己在思维上、学习上有没有什么改变?

Na jing guo le shi duo nian de ying yu xue xi, bao kuo ma ma shi ying yu lao shi de jia ting fen wei, jue de zi ji zai si wei shang, xue xi shang you mei you shen me gai bian?

As you have learned English for more than ten years, and your mother is an English teacher as well, can you feel any changes on thinking or studies?

W: 有, 我现在觉得我爸妈太保守了, 而且什么都要帮我做决定。我觉得通过英语阅读, 对西方文化的了解加深, 自己思维上已经积极主动了很多, 比我爸妈心目中的适应能力强, 而且更能应变。

You, wo xian zai jue de wo ba ma tai bao shou le, er qie shen me dou yao bang wo zuo jue ding. Wo jue de tong guo ying yu jue du, dui xi fang wen hua de liao jie jia shen, zi ji si wei shang yi jing ji ji zhu dong le hen duo, bi wo ba ma xin mu zhong de shi ying neng li qiang, er qie geng neng ying bian,

Yes. I think my parents are too conservative and try to make every decision for me. With a good number of English reading and increasing understanding of western culture, I have become further more proactive and adaptable than my parents think.

Interview with Xie Mingming

(Female, 20)

Setting: Through the telephone

Length of Time: 25 minutes

Note: The interviewee is a potential student of Liberal Arts, who has been studying English for 10 years.

Zhang Yichao: Z Xie Mingming: X

Z: 你说爸爸在北京, 妈妈在新泽西, 可不可以分享一下他们在教育你的过程中有哪些文化理念? 是否相同?

Ni shuo ba ba zai Beijing, ma ma zai New Jersey, ke bu ke yi fen xiang yi xia ta men zai jiao yu ni de guo cheng zhong you na xie wen hua li nian? Shi fou xiang tong?

As you said, your father lives in Beijing, while your mother is in New Jersey. Could you describe their cultural conceptions in the process of education? Same or not?

X: 太不一样了。先说我爸, 他特别好面子, 像我前段时间申请季, 他希望我能去一个比较为人熟知的学校, 这样他回国说出去也有面子。我妈比较民主, 这也跟她的学习经历有关, 她会帮我分析, 然后鼓励我自己做决定, 只要我自己能承担, 她都 OK, 她更关注我的感受吧, 而不是说我能给她带去什么风光。

Tai bu yi yang le. Xian shuo wo ba, ta te bie hao mian zi, xiang wo qian duan shi jian shen qing ji, ta xi wang wo neng qu yi ge bi jiao wei ren shu zhi de xue xiao, zhe yang ta hui guo shuo chu qu ye you mian zi. Wo ma bi jiao min zhu, zhe ye gen ta de xue xi jing li you guan, ta hui bang wo fen xi, ran hou gu li wo zi ji zuo jue ding, zhi yao wo zi ji neng cheng dan, ta dou OK, ta geng guan zhu wo de gan shou ba, er bu shi shuo wo neng gei ta dai qu shen me feng guang.

Absolutely not. Firstly, face plays an important role in my dad's life. For instance, in my university application, he suggested that I should enter a well-known university. On the other hand, influenced by her own experiences, my mum is much more democratic and encourages me to take responsibility of my own decisions. She is always ready to help me, give advice, concerns not only my future, but also my feelings; but hardly make decisions for me.

Z: 可不可以简要总结一下家里的文化氛围?

Ke bu ke yi jian yao zong jie yi xia jia li de wen hua fen wei?

Can you briefly describe the cultural atmosphere?

X: 比较民主、平等，有什么就直接说出来互相沟通，也会给我个人空间，平常不会翻我手机或是要我交代行踪，比如和谁去哪里干什么。另外，公私分得很明确，家里不大会说什么他们生意上的事情。

Bi jiao min zhu, ping deng, you shen me jiu zhi jie shuo chu lai hu xiang gou tong, ye hui gei wo ge ren kong jian, ping chang bu hui fan wo shou ji huo shi yao wo jiao dai xing zong, bi ru he shui, qu na li, gan shen me. Ling wai, gong si fen de hen min que, jia li bu da hui shuo shen me ta men sheng yi shang de shi qing.

If something, democracy and equality. Anything can be spoken out and communicated freely. We are family, but still have a right to privacy and to our personal space. My parents will never peep my cell phone or require me to declare whereabouts. Moreover, keep work and life distinctly separate. They rarely talk about business at home.

Z: 你觉得这些文化理念或者教育方式对你的学习，特别是英语学习有没有什么影响?

Ni jue de zhe xie wen hua li nian huo zhe jiao yu fang shi dui ni de xue xi, te bie shi ying yu xue xi you mei you shen me ying xiang?

Do you think this type of cultural concept or educational method has any impact on your study, especially your English study?

X: 当然，我爸妈经常鼓励我不要怕犯错，语言就是表达的一种工具，我爸会跟我分享他刚来美国的时候说英语闹过什么笑话。我受我妈影响更大，我觉得我挺乐观的，就觉得自己的英语今天比昨天好，明天还会比今天好，现在我想跟 native 差别不大了吧。

Dang ran, wo ba ma jing chang gu li wo bu yao pa fan cuo, yu yan jiu shi biao da de yi zhong gong ju, wo ba hui gen wo fen xiang ta gang lai mei guo de shi hou shuo ying yu nao guo shen me xiao hua. Wo shou wo ma ying xiang geng da, wo jue de wo ting le guan de, jiu jue de zi ji de ying yu jin tian bi zuo tian hao, ming tian hai hui bi jin tian hao, xian zai wo xiang gen native cha bie bu da le ba.

Certainly. My parents often encourage me to open my mouth, never afraid to make mistakes. Language is a tool to express ourselves. My father would even share with me his experiences, sometimes jokes, when he come to America in the very beginning. As for me, my mum produces a greater influence on me. She helps me to keep optimistic and believe my English is getting better and better. I think I am a 99% native speaker.

Z: 那你觉得和外国同学相处和中国同学相处有没有什么不一样的地方?

Na ni jue de he wai guo tong xue xiang chu gen he zhong guo tong xue xiang chu you mei you shen me bu yi yang de di fang?

Is there any differences when getting along with your foreign classmates and Chinese ones?

X: 有，跟外国同学相处大家都直接，想说什么就开门见山，但是中国同学比较委婉，总是试图顾全所有人的感受，常常绕了很多圈子，我都不知道他想表达什么意思。其次，中国同学有很多定势思维，他们想的更多的是“应该怎么样”，而不是“我想怎么样”。我觉得，中国同学好像都活得特别艰苦，永远在自习，吃得很随便，从来不去玩，跟美国文化有点格格不入。

You, gen wai guo tong xue xiang chu da jia dou hen zhi jie, xiang shuo shen me jiu kai men jian shan, dan shi zhong guo tong xue bi jiao wei wan, zong shi shi tu gu quan suo you ren de gan shou, chang chang rao le hen duo quan zi, wo dou bu zhi dao ta xiang biao da shen me yi si. Qi ci, zhong guo tong xue you hen duo ding shi si wei, ta men xiang de geng duo de shi "ying gai zen me yang", er bu shi "wo xiang zen me yang". Wo jue de, zhong guo tong xue hao xiang huo de te bie jian ku, yong yuan zai zi xi, chi de hen sui bian, cong lai bu chu qu wan, gen mei guo wen hua you dian ge ge bu ru.

Yes. Along with my foreign classmates, we are “straight”, I mean, come straight to the point. Whereas, Chinese classmates express euphemistically, trying to care everyone’s feelings. I am often confused, because they talk in circles. Besides, my Chinese classmates can hardly break their thinking set, always paying attention to “what they should do” rather than “what they want to do”. From my point of view, my Chinese classmates seem to live a tough life, getting up earlier than cock, work harder than cattle and eat worse than pigs. Wholly alien to American culture.

Z: 那你心目中的美国文化是怎么样的呢?

Na ni xin mu zhong de mei guo wen hua shi zen me yang de ne?

What’s the so-called *American culture* in your mind?

X: 强调 Individualism, 每个人都不一样, 没必要什么都跟着别人来; 还有平等, 美国也有 social class, 但是美国的中下阶层机会还是会比中国的中下阶层多的多; 我刚才也说了, 美国科技真的很发达, 这就是为什么美国能出 IBM 或是 Apple, 美国有这种氛围也有这种意识; 大部分人愿意接受改变, 相信未来一定会更好, 能很积极地应对竞争; 最重要的是, 美国人会玩, 小到每天, 大到每年, 一定有固定单位的时间是用来享受生活的。

Qiang diao Individualism, mei ge ren dou bu yi yang, mei bi yao shen me dou gen zhe bie ren lai, da bu fen ren yuan yi jie shou gai bian, xiang xin wei lai yi ding hui geng hao, neng hen ji ji de ying dui jing zheng; zui zhong yao de shi, mei guo ren hui wan, xiao dao mei tian, da dao mei nian, yi ding you gu ding dan wei de shi jian shi yong lai xiang shou sheng huo de.

Firstly, respect and emphasize *Individualism*. Everyone is unique and there is no need to follow others. The great majority are willing to change, to fight for the promising future. Most importantly, Americans never ignore to enjoy themselves. Whether a day or a year, they arrange certain part of time to enjoy lifes.

Z: 你在美国待了 10 年之后觉得自己有没有什么地方改变了?

Ni zai mei guo dai le 10 nian zhi hou jue de zi ji you mei you shen me di fang gai bian le?

Can you feel any difference about yourself after living in America for 10 years?

X: 我觉得自己变化挺大的, 我以前比较被动, 现在能主动跟陌生人打交道, 表达自己的想法; 也比较独立, 像申请学校这样的事情都是自己在处理, 反正综合考虑过利弊之后, 觉得自己能承担, 就去做, 很少后悔; 说起来有点矛盾, 但独立之外确实也更能够融入团队合作, 美国很多都是 group work, 需要相互配合, 相互信任。不像中国很多“五年计划”, 我不会规定自己五年之后必须成为什么, 十年之内必须达到什么目标, 我的想法更多是短期的, 这个月想学烹饪, 下个月想去加拿大, 这种。

Wo jue de zi ji bian hua ting da de, bi jiao du li, xiang shen qing xue xiao zhe yang de shi qing dou shi zi ji zai chu li, fan zheng zong he kao lv guo li bi zhi hou, jue de zi ji neng cheng dan, jiu qu zuo, hen shao hou hui. Bu xiang zhong guo hen duo “wu nian ji hua”, wo bu hui gui ding zi ji wu nian zhi hou bi xu cheng wei shen me, shi nian zhi nei bi xu da dao shen me mu biao, wo de xiang fa geng duo shi duan qi de, zhe ge yue xiang xue peng ren, xia ge yue xiang qu jia na da, zhe yang.

Quite a lot. I become much more independent. I can handle big decisions, such as apply for a degree, on my own. Weighing pros and cons, as long as I can undertake the result, I will go ahead. In my life, there is no regret. Unlike my Chinese friends, they have something like “Five-year Plan”. I can’t understand it. I don’t like to set such goals like “What I should become within five years”. Instead, I prefer short-term planning, for example, I’d like to have a cooking lesson this month, or I prepare to go to Canada next month.
