RECENT CHINESE IMMIGRANTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

AND CULTURE LEARNING IN CANADA

by

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English culture during their first three years of settlement in Canada. The design of the study was qualitative, and the primary methodology was the interview guide approach. Participants were six Chinese immigrants who settled in Toronto, Canada. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data: Chinese immigrants' perceptions of their English language learning; Chinese immigrants' perceptions of culture learning; and language, culture and life expectations. The findings of the study support the existing literature and generate new insights into Chinese immigrants' experiences with English language and culture learning. Finally the study illustrated that immersion in a predominantly English speaking society is complex in nature and may be experienced in different ways.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview of the Study

Introduction

Every year many Chinese people emigrate to Canada as skilled workers. These immigrants face many challenges in learning and using English for their study and daily life in an English cultural context which is different from their own. The purpose of this study was to investigate six Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English culture during their first three years of settlement in Canada. The design of the study was qualitative and the primary methodology was the general interview approach. The setting was a metropolis in central Ontario.

Rationale

Canada, geographically one of the largest countries in the world, welcomes many immigrants and refugees each year. These people contribute to a diverse population. With the number of immigrants of different ethnic groups growing during the 1960s, the first Official Languages Act (OLA), passed in 1969, declared that English and French would enjoy equality of status in all institutions controlled directly by Parliament and by the Government of Canada. A new Official Languages Act, which came into effect in 1988, set out the three basic objectives of the Government of Canada: to (1) ensure respect for English and French as the official languages of Canada, and ensure equality of status and equal rights and privileges as to their use in all federal institutions; (2) set out the powers, duties, and functions of federal institutions with respect to the official languages of Canada; and (3) support the development of English and French linguistic minority communities and generally advance the equality of status and use of the English and French languages within Canadian society (OLA, 2003). In 1991, the Official Languages Regulations set out the criteria for communications with the public and the delivery of services to the public and to federal employees in English and French (Office of the

Commissioner of Official Language (OCOL), 2003).

Although French and English are the official languages in Canada, most people in the country are speakers of English. The 1991 census data indicate that "about 83% of Canadians speak English, 32% speak French," and "most French-speaking Canadians now live in Quebec" (OCOL, 2003, p. 9). To help immigrants from various countries and regions to acquire the official languages, the Government of Canada, in cooperation with provincial governments, school boards, community colleges, and immigrant and community organizations, offers free language training across the country for adult permanent residents. In most provinces the program is called Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada or LINC (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2003).

Many young Chinese have immigrated to Canada. According to the statistics report from CIC (2003), "in 2002 alone, 33,231 immigrants were from China," and in 2003, "China was by far the leading source country, with 8,282 new immigrants in the first quarter" (p. 5). Most Chinese immigrants settled in two provinces in Canada, namely, Ontario and British Columbia, and the majority spoke English. The report, *Immigrants from the People's Republic of China in Canada* (1996), states that "in 1991, 43% of Chinese immigrants lived in Ontario, 34% resided in British Columbia" and "in 1991, 63% could conduct a conversation in one or both official languages: 2% spoke English and French, 60% could carry on a conversation in English, and less than 1% could speak French" (p. 1).

For recent Chinese immigrants, the capability to use English in the new environment is a critical factor in their adaptation to the new country. As well, their direct contact with the mainstream English language culture can further promote their English language learning (Li, 1998). Schumann (1978a) suggests that the degree of the ESL learners' adaptation to the second culture determines the success of their second language learning. Hinkel (1999) also notes that cultural factors, such as social norms, worldviews, beliefs and value systems, can influence

many different aspects of second language learning and use. John-Steiner and Mahn (1996) emphasize that sociocultural approaches to learning language are based on "the concept that human activities take place in cultural contexts, are mediated by language and other symbolic systems, and can be best understood when investigated in their cultural development" (p. 191). Thus, it is necessary to explore immigrants' language learning experiences in relation to their culture experiences since "learning language and understanding culture are intertwined with the context within which they occur" (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996, p. 192).

There are a number of options available for foreigners who wish to apply for permanent resident status to Canada. The categories to which people most frequently apply are as follows: Skilled Worker Class, Business Class, and Family Class (CIC, 2002a).

CIC (2002b) describes the Skilled Worker Class as "people whose education and work experience will help them find work and make a home for themselves as permanent residents in Canada" (p. 3). The new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, implemented on June 28, 2002 (CIC, 2002b), notes that skilled workers are people "who may become permanent residents because they are able to become economically established in Canada. To be accepted as a Skilled Worker, applicants must meet the minimum work experience requirements and earn enough points in the factors to meet the pass mark" (p. 1). Only applicants who have completed undergraduate degree program(s) or obtained certain diploma(s) or degree(s), together with minimum period of work experience, meet the criteria of the Skilled Worker Class. In addition, they must provide documentation that they have acquired facility in at least one of the two official languages, English and French.

The second way to emigrate to Canada is through Business Class. Applicants in this category are those "who can invest in, or start businesses in Canada and are expected to support the development of a strong and prosperous Canadian economy. The business immigrants are selected on their ability to become economically established in Canada" (CIC, 2002a, p. 3).

The third category, Family Class, requires sponsorship: "Canadian citizens and permanent residents living in Canada, 18 years of age or older, may sponsor close relatives or family members who want to become permanent residents of Canada" (CIC, 2002a, p. 5).

In 2002, 123,357 landed immigrants were admitted to Canada in the Skilled Worker Class; 65,277, in the Family Class, and 11,041 in the Business Class (CIC, 2002b). Since 1996, the major source of ethnic Chinese immigrants has been from mainland China (CIC, 2000).

In a review of the literature on research about Chinese Canadians, Kwan (1996) found that despite the large influx of Chinese immigrants into Canada, the current literature focuses primarily on Asians and Chinese Americans and academic achievement in the United States. He contends that "data concerning Chinese-Americans is routinely paired with that of Japanese-Americans and subsumed under the category of Asian-Americans" (p. 25). Little research has been conducted on Chinese immigrants' perceptions of their English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English society and on what these perceptions mean to them.

Since the majority of Chinese immigrants applying in Skilled Worker Class are well-educated, young, and have already acquired an understanding of the English language during their schooling in China, they should be able to adapt to life in Canada very easily. In truth, their lives in Canada are not always satisfactory. *New Star Times*, a popular Chinese newspaper in Toronto, published an article about current Chinese immigrants' lives in Canada (2003). The article reported the reasons why Chinese immigrants could not find employment in Canada suited to their skills and credentials:

> Non-recognition or under-valuation of foreign education, skills and credentials, though, constitute a widely recognized problem. The profound reason is due to the fact that in spite of their good professional qualifications, many recent immigrants have very limited language skills, with little English speaking proficiency ("Severe Situation", 2003).

Shao (1994) conducted a study of an ESL training program for 30 Chinese adult learners in Ontario and found the following:

Despite the fact that they have already accomplished a fairly high education in China, they would still encounter many problems after commencing their lives here: high unemployment, underemployment in low-wage jobs, cultural conflicts, and social isolation. What's worse, very often these problems affect their survival at work and social interactions, not to mention the quality of their life in a new circumstance. (p. 3)

Language problems among many recent Chinese immigrants have affected not only their learning and academic achievement in school contexts, but also have prevented them from adapting to a new sociocultural context (Ho, 2002). Thus, it is very important to investigate Chinese immigrants' perceptions of learning English language and culture in Canada and elucidate their learning experiences.

Research Questions

The following questions guided the research.

1) What are recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of learning ESL after their settlement in Canada?

2) What are their perceptions of their culture learning experiences in a country with both a different language and culture?

3) What are their perceptions of the relations between their culture learning experiences and development of proficiency in English?

Personal Assumptions

My reasons for undertaking this study were grounded in my past working experience in China and current living status in Canada. I worked as an English teacher for three years in a university in China. During that time I taught college English to full-time undergraduate students, and also taught English evening classes and English training programs for adult

learners. The adult learners had more sophisticated work and social experiences than the undergraduates and demonstrated different learning attitudes and motivation towards English language learning. Thus, I became interested in understanding the adult learners and learning about their experiences and perceptions of ESL learning.

In 2002, I began a Master of Education program in Canada. During my first year in Canada, I found that with immersion in a predominantly English society, English was no longer an abstract language tool, but a lively component in everyday life. What is more, my current English learning experience differs from my past experience in that it is not rote memorization of abstract rules and vocabulary but is linked with social activities. From my daily communication with native speakers, I have found that effective learning of ESL occurs more easily through a functional approach within a natural setting.

In 2000, my husband and I applied for immigration to Canada in the Skilled Worker Class. Recently we became permanent residents in Canada, and we have begun our new lives together in Canada. I have had opportunities to discuss culture learning with friends who immigrated from mainland China several years ago, and found that they had great anxiety and concern about their English language proficiency. Although they realized that learning English was supported through culture learning, they sometimes did not know how to integrate the two or how to enhance their ESL proficiency through culture learning. They tended to link almost every failure of their current life in Canada with their levels of English language proficiency. For these reasons I believe that it is important to study recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English society.

Purpose and Significance

First, the purpose of this study was to investigate six recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English society during their first three years of settlement in Canada during the years 2001-2004. The

findings might be helpful for ESL teachers to learn more of this particular group of students and to better meet their language and culture learning needs in the educational context. Second, the study might provide strategies and suggestions for ESL learners as they begin their lives in Canada. Therefore, this study has the potential to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on ESL teaching and learning, especially on ways to conceptualize culture in ESL education contexts.

Limitations

First, the sample size was small. Participants were six Chinese immigrants living in Toronto, Ontario. The findings are not generalizable, but might be transferable to a similar sample of respondents. The second limitation is that the present study focused on immigrants from mainland China who were admitted to Canada within the past three years (2001-2004) in the Skilled Worker Class. Thus, the results may not be representative of the experiences or perceptions of other Chinese immigrants or other Chinese groups in Canada.

The first chapter presents the introduction, research questions, rationale, personal assumptions, significance and limitations. The review of literature is provided in Chapter Two. Research methodologies are provided in Chapter Three. Presentation and interpretation of findings are included in Chapter Four. Conclusions, implications, and recommendations for practice and research are identified in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Literature

The study focused on English language and culture learning of the Chinese immigrants. The literature review is organized into three sections: second language learning theories; theories of culture learning; and immigrants' second language (L2) learning in the workplace.

Second Language Learning

Cook (1996) defines second language learning as "a language acquired by a person in addition to his mother tongue" (p. 3). Ellis (1986) uses the term "Second Language Acquisition" (SLA) to mean "the way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom" (p. 25). In this study, the two terms are used interchangeably. Ellis (1986) points out that "the research literature abounds in approaches, theories, models, laws and principles about second language acquisition" (p. 248). The section begins with an historical overview of theories of second language learning and then describes sociopsychological dimensions of language learning; finally it will review the advances of L2 theories in the 1990s.

Historical perspectives. In a review of the literature of the development of the research and theories in second language learning, Ellis (1997) classifies trends into, firstly, behaviorist theory and mentalist theory, and, secondly, sociopsychological theories.

The dominant psychological theory of the 1950s and 1960s was behaviorist learning theory. Ellis (1997) notes that, according to this theory, language learning was thought to be like any other kind of learning in that it involved habit formation. The central idea of the theory was that habits were formed when learners responded to stimuli in the environment and subsequently had their responses reinforced so that they were remembered. Thus, a habit is a stimulus-response connection in the learning process. Ellis (1997) notes that behaviorist demonstrations of L2 acquisition emphasized only what could be directly observed, such as "the 'input' to the learner and the learner's own 'output', and ignore what goes on in the 'black box' of the learners' mind"

(p. 32). He argues that behaviorist theory ignored the fact that "learners frequently do not produce output that simply reproduces the input, and learning is not just a response to external stimuli" (p. 32). The inadequacies of behavioral theory of L2 acquisition led researchers to consider alternative theoretical frameworks.

In the 1960s and 1970s a mentalist theory of first language (L1) acquisition was introduced into the L2 acquisition field. Ellis (1997) explains that, according to this theory, only human beings were capable of learning language since the "human mind is equipped with a faculty for learning language, referred as a Language Acquisition Device [LAD]" (p. 32). He notes that the LAD was considered "the primary determinant of language acquisition", and the role of input was "only to 'trigger' the operation of the language acquisition device" (p. 33). In the mentalist theory, the central concept is "interlanguage" (IL), a term coined by the American linguist Larry Selinker (1972). When comparing SLA with L1 learning, Selinker theorized that L2 learners constructed a linguistic system that drew, in part, on the learners' L1 but was different from it and also from the target language (TL), a language that a non-native speaker is in the process of learning (Ellis, 1997). A learner's interlanguage was, therefore, considered to be a unique linguistic system. Ellis (1997) explains that the concept of IL may be viewed as a metaphor for how L2 acquisition takes place. It implies that the human mind functions like a computer. The learner is exposed to input which is processed in two stages. First, parts of it are attended to and taken into short-term memory intake. Second, some of the intake is stored in long-term memory as L2 knowledge. Finally, L2 knowledge is used by the learner to produce spoken and written output, or what it is called learner language. Ellis (1997) points out that the concept of interlanguage offered a general account of how L2 acquisition occurs which incorporated elements from mentalist theories. For instance, it explores some components of a mentalist theory of human communicative competence; however, it is problematic in that it does not offer a precise explanation of what takes places during L2

acquisition. Ellis suggests that since the mentalist theory is primarily connected with identifying the internal mechanisms for the development of L2 acquisition, a further consideration of the external elements, such as social factors in L2 learning, is also very important since language interactions primarily need to take place in a social context.

Sociopsychological dimensions of L2 learning. Ellis (1997) notes that two strands of research have contributed to the understanding of second language learning: the sociopsychological model as represented by the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972), and the acculturation model developed by Schumann (1978a).

Gardner and Lambert (1972) conducted a series of studies on the acquisition of French as a Second Language (FSL). Their findings enabled them to construct a sociopsychological theory of second- or foreign-language learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) explain that the social psychological model of second language acquisition is a theory which focuses on L2 learners' bilingual language development and the psychological aspects of their second language acquisition. They propose that second language learning is a social psychological phenomenon and a successful L2 learner should be psychologically prepared to adopt various aspects of behaviors to another linguistic-culture group. Some psychological factors, such as the learner's ethnocentric tendencies and his/her attitudes towards the second linguistic-culture group, will determine how successful the learner is in learning the new language, and the learners' attitudes and motivation are extremely important in second language learning.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify two types of motivation that are responsible for FSL proficiency and L2 learning: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972) defined the two as following:

"Integrative motivation" implies a willingness to acquire the language and social habits characteristic of the linguistic community of the target culture, that is, a desire to be like representative members of the "other" language community, and to become associated, at

least vicariously with that other community. (Gardner & Lambert, 1972, p. 14)

"Instrumental motivation" is characterized by the second language learner's view of using the target language as an instrument for personal fulfillment or advancement, that is, a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantage through knowledge of a foreign language". (1972, p. 14)

A learner is considered to be integratively motivated when s/he wishes to identify with another ethnic group. With instrumental motivation, the learner is motivated to learn L2 for utilitarian purposes, such as furthering a career, improving social status or meeting educational requirements.

Freeman and Long (1991) contend that Gardner and Lambert did not distinguish between motivation and attitudes in their early work. They describe two studies which found that attitudinal factors appeared to have relatively little influence on SLA of children. For example, in studying a group of children in French immersion programs, Genesee and Hamayan (as cited in Freeman & Long, 1991) found that there was no relationship between attitude factors and the proficiency in French of six-year-old Anglophone Canadians. Chihara and Oller (as cited in Freeman & Long, 1991) studied the attitudes of Japanese children living in Osaka towards ESL. The findings of these studies showed mostly weak correlations. Freeman and Long (1991) suggest that "perhaps this is simply because attitudes are not fully developed in young children" (p. 176).

In contrast to these studies that question the significance of attitudes, Gardner (1985) argues that some significant attitudes can change the result of SLA. Gardner and Lambert (as cited in Gardner, 1985) conducted a study on a group of Anglophone students who attended a four-day excursion to Quebec. They tested the students both before and after the excursion on attitude measures and obtained one significant effect, an increase in favorable attitudes toward French Canadians. There was also a tendency for students to show an increased interest in

learning French. Gardner (1985) explains that the different social contexts and contact with the other culture would appear to influence the outcomes. For example, all the students in Gardner and Lambert's (1974) study were Anglophone students learning FSL in a bilingual context. With increased exposure to the other community, Gardner (1985) suggests it is quite possible that attitudes can direct the learners to have more interactions with the other culture; consequently, "the amount of contact" (p. 88) will often result in positive learning experiences.

Gardner (1985) postulates that the reason some students wish to learn more about the other culture community is that when learners are anxious to develop skill in another group's language as a means of getting on the "inside" of another cultural community, "sociopsychological factors, such as one's attitudes, one's views of foreign people and culture, and one's orientation toward the learning process, can have a varied and dramatic impact on learners' language acquisition" (p. 131). In essence, Gardner (1985) asserts that "the psychological model proposes that the extent to which an individual successfully acquires a second language will depend upon ethnocentric tendencies, attitudes toward the other community, orientation toward language learning and motivation" (p. 132). The social psychological model is important to the development of theories of SLA because it incorporates psychological and culture dimensions of language learning.

Schumann's (1978a) acculturation model also takes a central position in the development of theories of SLA. As part of a larger study, the Harvard Project, Schumann (1978a) conducted a longitudinal case study of a 33-year-old Costa Rican immigrant, Alberto. As a member of a group of Latin-American working-class immigrants, Alberto was socially and psychologically quite distant from the TL group. In his explanation of why Alberto failed to improve his L2 proficiency through formal or informal instruction, Schumann (1978a) presented a taxonomy of factors that influence second language acquisition: social, affective, personality, cognitive, biological, aptitude, personal, input, and instructional factors. Schumann asserts that, "although

the particular categories may appear to be relevant to second language acquisition, only two types of factors, social and affective, are the major causal ones in second language acquisition and these two are subsumed by the larger construct of acculturation" (p. 135).

In the Harvard study, Schumann (1978a) reported that in the early stages of SLA all the learners were linguistically similar, including those who were ultimately more successful. He suggests that learning in the early stages of SLA is characterized by the same processes that are responsible for the formation of pidgin language, an auxiliary language, generally of a hybrid and partially developed nature. Such a language frequently is used primarily for commercial purposes (Schumann, 1978a). Pidgin language is not the mother tongue of anyone using it, and it has a simplified grammar and a restricted, often polyglot vocabulary (Schumann, 1978a).

Schumann (1978b) also found that when learners had little contact with the target language, there would be social and psychological distance which would influence their learning experiences. Thus, in a negative learning situation such as the one Alberto had, the learners receive very little L2 input. Also, when the psychological distance is great, learners fail to convert the input. Similarly, in research conducted by Ellis (1986) on how ESL learners develop their communication skills in a classroom setting, he found that, when good quality comprehensible input was provided, the necessary grammar was automatically acquired, and then learners practiced their skills in communication; in other words, those learners who engage in regular use of their second language and receive the greater quantity of input will most likely demonstrate a greater ability to use their second language (Ellis, 1986). Ellis explains that comprehension input refers to language which a L2 learner can understand: "that language may be comprehensible in this sense through the aid of clues such as gestures, situations, or prior information" (Ellis, 1986, p. 155). Ellis states that SLA happens when "the L2 data which the learner hears" are accepted as "intake," and are "the portion of the L2 which the learner assimilates" (1986, p.159). Ellis uses the term "intake" to refer to the language input to which

learners are exposed. It can be spoken or written: "Input serves as the data, which language learners must use to determine the rules of the target language. Access to comprehensible input may be a necessary condition for acquisition of a second language" (Ellis, 1986, p. 161). Schumann (1978a) refers to this account of SLA in the early stage as the "pidginization hypothesis" (p. 110). When pidginization persists during learners' SLA, they no longer revise their interlanguage system in the direction of the target language; thus, their learning gets fossilized, or the learners fail to reach target language competence (Schumann, 1978a). Schumann (1978a) claims that "pidginization may characterize all early second language acquisition and ... under conditions of social and psychological distance it persists" (p.110). Thus, successful learners are those who can move beyond the early stage of pidginization in SLA.

Schumann (1978b) found that in the later stages of L2 development, social and psychological variables still played important roles as what they had done in the process of pidginization; the difference was that the impacts needed to be positive in the later stages for one's L2 development. He suggested that there existed "a function of the same social and psychological variables that initially produce pidginization, although the values of the variables need to change to positive ones. Collectively, they make up one large causal factor in SLA, acculturation" (p. 32). Schumann (1978b) emphasizes the importance of "acculturation" and characterizes the relationship between acculturation and SLA in the following way: "Second language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language" (p. 34).

Schumann (1986) distinguishes between two types of acculturation. Type one acculturation occurs when learners are "both socially integrated into the target-language group and psychologically open to the target language" (p. 5). For type two acculturation, learners

should be not only socially integrated and psychologically open, but also consciously or unconsciously wish to adopt the lifestyle and values of the target-language group. Schumann (1986) stresses that, although either type of acculturation is sufficient to ensure SLA, the degree of acculturation can control the level of input that the learner receives and reflect how well the learner can use L2. During the whole process of SLA, Schumann (1986) emphasizes that social and psychological contact with the target-language group are essential conditions, since they can determine whether the learner will successfully surpass the pidginizaton stage to the higher level of acculturation.

Advances in theories. Since the 1990s, there has been a shift in emphasis in SLA research. Sociolinguists propose that L2 issues should be placed in the context of the broader social settings where language is being used for practical purposes (Dörnyei, 2003). Dörnyei (2003) notes that recent L2 research draws upon fields such as psychology, sociology and economics. To date, however, L2 motivation research with a social psychological emphasis still holds a dominant position. For instance, in a review of the literature by Crookes and Schmidt (1991), they found that in the field of SLA, a considerable body of research on motivation has followed Gardner's and Lambert's early work on the role of attitudes and motivation in second language acquisition. Dörnyei (2003) comments that traditionally the dominant theoretical influences in SLA have been linguistic and psycholinguistic, but recent studies more often explore the socio-psychological aspects of SLA in regard to learners' motivation. He emphasizes that many new theories or notions, such as investment in SLA and willingness to communicate (WTC), are derived from Gardner and Lambert's (1972) study. The major difference is that given the demographic and ethnographic changes in society, for instance, in a multicultural setting such as the United States or Canada, "L2 is no longer a mere learnable school subject, but it is also socially and culturally bound, which makes language learning a deeply social event that requires the incorporation of a wide range of elements of the L2 culture" (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 1).

Consequently, researchers tend to contextualize the study of L2 motivation in relation to contexts such as multiculturalism, language globalization, language contact, and power relations between different ethnolinguistic groups (Dörnyei, 2003).

As noted above, two new influences on SLA have been identified by recent researchers, investment in SLA and Willingness to Communicate. In a longitudinal case study of the language learning experiences of immigrant learners in Canada, Pierce (1995) suggests that "the concept of investment in the target language may be a useful complement to better represent human complexity and account for the ambivalence that learners sometimes feel in the process of language learning" (p. 9). According to Pierce (2000), the notion of investment can be best understood with reference to the economic metaphor "cultural capital," a term coined by Bourdieu and Passerson (1977, cited in Pierce, 2000, p. 444) to refer to the knowledge and modes of thought that characterized different classes and groups in relation to specific sets of social forms. In her case study on immigrant language learners over a 9-month period, Pierce (2000) found that it is natural for learners to anticipate a return on the investment in a second language that will give them an access to previously unattainable resources: "If learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (p. 444). By symbolic resources, Pierce (2000) means resources such as language, education, and friendship. In contrast she uses the term material resources to include capital goods, real estate, and money.

Pierce (2000) explains that the notion of investment in SLA presupposes that, when language learners communicate with others, not only are they exchanging information with target language speakers, but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. She notes that "the notion conceives of the language learner as having a complex identity and multiple desires" (Pierce, 2000, p. 444).

The notion of Willingness to Communicate was first identified by McCroskey and Richmond (1985). In a study on how L2 learners interacted with other people, McCroskey and Richmond (1985) observed that in some situations a person might choose to communicate or not to communicate with others. They found that people exhibit differential behavioral tendencies to communicate more or less across communication situations, and "although talk is a vital component in interpersonal communication and the development of interpersonal relationships, people differ dramatically from one another in the degree to which they actually do talk" (p. 2). McCroskey and Richmond (1985) found that "some people talk very little and they tend to speak only when spoken to and sometimes not even then. Others tend to verbalize almost constantly" (p. 3). This variability in talking behavior is rooted in a personality-based predisposition which the researchers labeled as "Willingness to Communicate" (WTC) (McCroskey & Richmond, 1985).

Dörnyei (2003) notes the L2 researchers have begun to apply the concept of Willingness to Communicate to L2 research. He suggests that, in one's first language, WTC is a fairly stable personality trait, and is developed over the years. However, the situation is more complex and quite different with regard to L2 use, because the level of one's L2 proficiency, and particularly that of the individual's L2 communicative competence, is an additional powerful modifying variable. What is important, though, is that WTC and communicative competence are not the same: there are many L2 learners who are competent L2 speakers yet tend to avoid L2 communication situations; whereas some less proficient learners actively seek opportunities to engage in L2 talk. Thus, MacIntyre, Clément, and Noels (1998) have argued that there is a need to examine the notion of WTC in the L2, and define the concept as the individual's "readiness to enter into discourse at a particular time with a specific person or persons, using a L2" (p. 8).

Dörnyei (2003) notes that the WTC model attempts to draw together a host of learner variables that have been well established as influences on second language acquisition and use,

resulting in a construct in which psychological and linguistic factors are integrated in an organic manner. Since the notion of WTC is relatively new in the development of L2 learning theory, several researchers have attempted to bring it into their own research. Baker and MacIntyre (2000), for example, have applied it to compare the nonlinguistic outcomes of an immersion and a nonimmersion program in Canada. Yashima (2002) has successfully used the WTC model to investigate the relations between L2 learning and L2 communication variables among Japanese learners of English. To date, "WTC has also been integrated as a predictor variable in research studies focusing on the motivational basis of L2 learners' communicative performance, accounting for a significant proportion of the variance" (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 9).

It is now broadly accepted that second language learning and second culture learning cannot be separated (Byram, 1989; Kramsch, 1993; Shanahan, 2000). Swiderski (1993) defines the relationship in the following way: "Culture is not learned as language is, yet language is not learned until culture is" (p. 7). According to Swiderski, an L2 learner is just like an outsider, and if one wants to participate in a community and be accepted as a member of the community, s/he needs to have both knowledge about and skill in language and culture. Shanahan (2000) indicates that culture represents a form of hidden curriculum in second and foreign language teaching. He explains that it is a new construct which draws attention to the relationship between language and culture in the area of foreign language teaching and research. Shanahan (2000) speaks to the important role of culture in second language learning: "Learning a second language needs to be viewed no longer as a window through which the culture can be observed but as a wide open door through which the culture makes itself accessible" (p. 13). A second or foreign language can rarely be learned or taught without addressing the culture of its speakers because language invariably refers to their knowledge and perceptions of the world, the concepts of culture, and cultural learning (Byram, 1989).

Culture Learning

Research on culture learning has contributed significantly to current theories of second language learning. This section of the review will focus on the meaning of culture learning, and the sociocultural contexts of culture learning.

Meaning of culture learning. Moore (1991) notes that early models tended to view "culture as a relatively invariant and static entity made up of accumulated, classifiable, observable, thus eminently teachable and learnable 'facts'" (p. 11). He argues that this perspective only focused on surface level behavior without looking at the underlying value orientations, and did not "recognize the variability of behavior within the target cultural community, the participative role of the individual in the creation of culture, or the interaction of language and culture in the making of meaning" (p. 15).

In 1994, Paige and his colleagues, Jorstad, Siaya, Klein and Colby, initiated the longitudinal Intercultural Studies Project (ISP), which is operated by the Center for Advanced Research in Language Acquisition (CARLA) in the United States. The central purpose of the ISP is to advance culture teaching in the language education profession. Paige et al. (1999) examined the literature pertaining to culture learning in language education programs. They reported that the more recent models view culture as "dynamic and variable", and "the meaning of culture is continuously being constructed through human interaction and communication" (p. 4). Paige et al. (1999) define culture learning as follows:

> Culture learning is the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture-general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction within individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and ongoing process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively. (p. 3)

In this perspective, culture is not something that is simply absorbed, but something that is learned. The learning goals shift from the memorization of cultural facts to higher order learning

outcomes and learning how to learn about culture (Paige et al., 1999).

Paige et al. (1999) describe two factors which influence culture learning: contexts and settings of culture learning. For language and culture learning, context is an overarching concept which subsumes many other variables such as the setting, the teacher, the learner, instructional methods, instructional materials and assessment approaches. They cite Byram (1988, cited in Paige et al., 1999), who theorizes that language has no function independent of the context in which it is used. Thus, language always refers to something beyond itself: the cultural context. This cultural context defines the language patterns being used when particular persons come together under certain circumstances at a particular time and place. Paige et al. (1999) assert that "this combination of elements always has a cultural meaning which influences language use" (p. 9).

Gudykunst and Kim (1992) distinguish between two types of contexts that are important in intercultural encounters: external context and internal context. External context refers to "the various locations or settings where interaction occurs and the meanings society attaches to them" (p. 23). For example, two people might address each other more formally in an office setting than if they were to meet outside on the street because the culture views the workplace as a more formal and professional, rather than a social, setting. Internal context, on the other hand, "refers to the cultural meanings that people themselves bring into encounter" (Gudykunst & Kim, 1992). It is the internal context that creates the conditions for understanding or misunderstanding among people from different cultures as there are many cultural variations that influence how people perceive situations and each other; for example, how far they stand apart during a conversation (Paige et al., 1999). Therefore, for L2 learners, it is not only necessary to learn the language within the culture, but to understand the culture through the appropriate use of the language, and to interpret the culture correctly within particular contexts.

Paige et al. (1999) have classified the settings for language and culture learning. They

explain that there are two principal settings for culture learning in second language acquisition: the naturalistic setting of the field and the formal and structured setting of the classroom. In looking at culture learning in a naturalistic setting, Paige et al. (1999) suggest that study abroad programs can best represent how culture is acquired in a more natural context for the learners. In reviewing different study abroad programs, Paige et al. conclude that research generally supports the position that learning L2 in a natural setting, such as studying abroad, can enhance learners' feelings of self-confidence and self-esteem, as well as engender positive attitudes toward language and culture learning. For adult learners, in particular, Paige et al. (1999) propose that those individuals who have interactive encounters such as socializing with host culture persons gain more than those who engage in non-interactive behaviors such as watching television or reading in the second language.

Similarly, Li (2003) conducted a study on eight adult ESL learners who were enrolled in university programs or courses in Canada. Although the learners were from various countries and of different ethnic groups, they all indicated that "the immersion learning in a predominantly English culture provided them more opportunities to listen, read, speak and write English"; and "enabled them to receive a large amount of valuable English language input" (Li, 2003, p. 71). Studies on the influence of setting in language learning demonstrate that immersion in the target culture or studying in a naturalistic setting is a significant factor that can accelerate second language and second culture learning (Paige et al., 1999).

Paige et al. (1999) explain that the term "structured settings" refers to culture learning in the classroom. According to Paige et al. (1999), the formal classroom as a venue for culture learning provides a very different setting from the study abroad environment. They note that "there is only a small selection of classroom process variables that can be agreed upon as potentially influential for learning" (p. 17) and that the theoretical literature on the role of the classroom in language and culture learning reveals a variety of perspectives regarding its

contribution to culture learning. Paige et al. then report on Krashen's earlier research. In a similar study on how classroom learning contributes to ESL learner's language acquisition, Krashen (1981) suggested that the classroom setting was not conducive to language or culture acquisition; rather, it contributed to the learning of rules. He also pointed out that while more formal instruction means more language proficiency in ESL, it does not guarantee that the learners will have the necessary knowledge of the target language society and culture to communicate well with the target language group.

Paige et al. (1999) explain that, although there are theoretical criticisms of the classroom as an environment for culture learning, a structured classroom setting is still the major approach to learning second language and culture. One advantage of the approach is that the formal classroom emphasizes rules, sequence, and predictable error correction by the teacher. Naturalistic settings do not function in this way.

Furthermore, some researchers (Damen, 1987; Kramsch, 1993; Mitchell, 1988) have theorized that the classroom as an artificial community can provide some unexpected benefits for language and culture learning. In particular, Damen (1987), Kramsch (1993) and Mitchell (1988) hypothesize that the classroom is a protective environment where students can feel free to make mistakes without any lasting repercussions and that this protective setting enables students to safely experiment with the language. Thus, this context encourages ESL learners to make sense of the language and culture for themselves.

Sociocultural contexts of culture learning. In the field of adult education, the effects of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation on student learning have been widely explored (Flannery, 2000; Guy, 1999; Hayes and Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 1996; Sheared, 1994; Tisdell, 1993, as cited in Alfred, 2002). However, literature on sociocultural contexts, such as culture difference, culture awareness, culture identity, and second language learning among immigrant adult students, is rare (Alfred, 2002; Hvitfeldt, 1986).

Goodenough (1971) found that immigrants who wanted to be acculturated to the target language society initially experienced culture shock. He explains that, "when there is a cultural gap between previous and current learning settings, those immigrant learners who have to cross cultural borders are usually shocked by the culture differences" (p. 13). Goodenough defines culture shock as describing the anxiety and feelings of surprise, disorientation, confusion, etc., experienced when people had to operate within an entirely different culture or social environment, such as a different country or a language setting different from where they once lived. According to Goodenough, culture shock generally happens when a person moves to a completely new environment. S/he will experience the feeling of not knowing what to do or how to do things in a new environment, and not knowing what is appropriate or inappropriate. He also points out that the feeling of culture shock generally sets in after the first few weeks of coming to a new place, and the symptoms of cultural shock can appear at different times.

Goodenough (1971) contends that, "although one can experience real pain from culture shock; it is also an opportunity for redefining one's life objectives, and it is a great opportunity for learning and acquiring new perspectives" (p. 20). In this sense, culture shock can help learners develop a better understanding of themselves and become more aware of culture differences.

One of the biggest culture differences between traditional Chinese culture and modern western culture lies in the different emphasis on Collectivism and Individualism. Greenfield (1994) suggests that individualism could be representative of prevailing western culture while collectivism should be the representative of many immigrant cultures, the Chinese culture in particular. He compares individualism and collectivism as following:

> Collectivism can foster interdependence and group success, promote adherence to norms, respect for authority/elders, group consensus. Under the influence of collectivism, people from many immigrant cultures associate with stable, hierarchical roles, such as dependent

on gender, family background, and age etc. (p. 3)

Individualism should be the representative of prevailing U.S. culture. It fosters

independence and individual achievement, promotes self-expression, individual thinking

and personal choice. People associate with egalitarian relationships and flexibility in roles,

e.g., upward mobility, and understand the physical world as knowable apart from its

meaning for human life. (p. 5)

Greenfield (1994) discusses the issues surrounding individualism and collectivism as cultural

scripts contrasting American European and East Asian cultures. Similarly, Bedford and Hwang

(2003) conducted a study of Chinese immigrants at workplace in Australia, and he finds that

there is a strong nexus between Chinese cultural values and workplace behavior. In particular,

the traditional Chinese cultural value, collectivism, plays an important role within the Chinese

immigrant group.

Kramsch (1996) suggests that culture awareness occurs when different cultural values and

beliefs strongly affect one's thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors within the socialization process.

He describes culture awareness as the system of cultural knowledge, values, beliefs, and

behavioral norms acquired by people belonging to a particular cultural group:

This term (culture awareness) refers to the action taking and meaning making of the

individual within a particular group setting. Cultural awareness has psychological power to

motivate and affect the behavior of the individual within the group. It is a system of beliefs

defined by history, customs, religion, tradition, gender or generational roles. It is exhibited

through the types of shelter people live in, the games they play, the tools they make, the

foods they eat, and the way they celebrate. (p. 4)

According to Kramsch (1996), the purpose of cultural awareness is to foster understanding and

appreciation for the wide variety of cultures represented in the target language community, and

to encourage L2 learners to recognize similarities between their own culture and the target

language culture while maintaining and respecting their own individuality and identity.

In sociology, Robyns (1994) uses the term "culture identity" to describe the feeling of identity of a group or culture, or of an individual as far as she/he is influenced by her/his belonging to a group or culture. He notes that "culture identity" is composed of three elements:

Categorization: we often put others (and ourselves) into categories. Labeling someone as a Muslim, a Turk, or a Jew are ways of saying other things about these people. Identification: we also associate with certain groups (our ingroups), which serves to bolster our self-esteem. Comparison: we compare our groups with other groups, seeing a favorable bias toward the group to which we belong. (p. 12)

In the field of second language acquisition, culture identity is considered a component of the process of acculturation (Schumann, 1986). Schumann (1986) contends that acculturation is a process in which members of one cultural group develop the awareness of their own culture identity, and adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group. He emphasizes the bilateral relationship between the two cultures.

Although acculturation flows or moves in the direction of a minority group adopting habits and language patterns of the dominant group, acculturation can be reciprocal, that is, the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group. Assimilation of one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, membership in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification (Schumann, 1986, p. 382).

Selover (2003) conducted a case study in four Chinatowns of California and she focused on the relationship among immigration, acculturation, and quality of life. According to the study, culture elements penetrate different aspects of immigration, and immigrant groups are better able to adapt to American life when they are able and willing to treat culture differences positively. Selover (2003) emphasizes that those immigrants who were more aware of life

changes mostly could handle the tensions better. According to Selover's study, some Chinese immigrants took cultural conflicts, exhilaration, and even ambivalence as signs of life in the immigration process, and the ongoing process of identifying and understanding similarities, differences, affinities, and disaffections was a feature of acculturation that allowed immigrants to make a cross-cultural transition (p. 6). She observes that the culture transition between the old traditions and those of the new country was a difficult process and took time to complete.

In general, cultural differences exist between immigrants' first culture and the mainstream culture in schools and society. According to Selover (2003), immigrant learners may differ in their learning experiences as a result of their degree of understanding of the host culture: "Adult educators, especially language teachers, should begin to address and respond to the cultural differences among students' original culture" (p. 5). Based on the understanding of their own cultural norms, immigrant learners need to learn how the two cultures affect their learning to make the best of their culture learning (Selover, 2003).

Immigrants' L2 Learning in the Workplace

In an era characterized by an increasingly mobile labor force, changing populations, and transformations in the nature of work, teachers, scholars, government agencies, employers, and employees need to understand important issues surrounding the use of language(s) at work (Duff, Wong, & Early, 2000). Ellis (1997) contends that, while second-language research has focused historically on either academic oral and written ESL issues at the kindergarten to university levels, or on the grammatical development of adults with limited schooling, few studies have focused on adult learners' linguistic experiences at work or in the wider community (Ellis, 1997).

It is essential that more contextualized research be conducted in work-related programs with adult ESL learners, particularly as more programs are being established for ESL and skills training in (or for) workplaces in Canada and throughout the world (Duff, Wong, & Early, 2000).

Garay and Bernhardt (1998) suggest that it is important to examine the experiences of individuals interacting in different languages in work environments and examine the new literacy and competencies required for work. Moreover, workplace learning for immigrant workers can provide not only a basis for improving work conditions, and productivity, but also a context in which to develop the mutual understanding and cooperation among employees and management teams to the ultimate benefit of both workers and society (Garay & Bernhardt, 1998).

ESL programs in the workplace. Sauve (2000) notes that since the 1980s, English in the Workplace (EWP) has been a popular option for teaching immigrant workers who are already employed. EWP is generally driven by the employer's desire to increase efficiency and safety on the job. This type of ESL instruction has often been funded by governments because it is less expensive to support workers in learning language on the job than to support them as unemployed persons on employment insurance, social assistance, or workers' compensation. In the early 1990s, when governments tried to eliminate outstanding deficits, government support was no longer available for workplace education programs. Currently only large employers with vision provide language training for immigrant workers.

Over the last decade, school systems in Canada and other industrialized countries have undergone extensive reforms. In January 1994, Education Minister Halvar Jonson introduced sweeping changes that restructured the education system in the province of Ontario. Several studies reveal that the federal government, despite its responsibility for immigration, and despite frequent appeals from the provinces, has steadfastly refused to allocate funds for the workplace programs for immigrants, arguing that education is the domain of the provinces ((Neu, Taylor & Ocampo, 2002). In 1980, as Chair of the influential Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, Donald Macdonald established a federal Task Force on Citizenship and Language Agreements/Programs, but, in the final meeting, the

schooling of immigrants was discussed but not resolved (Neu, Taylor & Ocampo, 2002). Critics argue that "both the federal and provincial levels of government accept that there is a problem, but the political will to redress it is still lacking" (Neu, Taylor & Ocampo, 2002, p. 182).

Workplace ESL programs vary considerably. They can be a few weeks in length, or they can go on for years. According to Sauve (2000), workplace ESL programs can focus exclusively on the language related to working in specific jobs, or they can combine language training with job training. For example, when Sauve (2000) and her colleagues ran a customer service program for parking attendants, they recognized that, since the majority of the employees were immigrants in need of some language support, it was necessary to teach them not only the language but also the skills of dealing with an often difficult public on the job. On the other hand, Gallo (2001) argues that most conventional approaches to workplace programs promote passive acceptance of knowledge by workers, "which is conducive to producing compliant workers in traditional workplaces and maintaining the status quo" (p. 2). Such workplace literacy programs use grammar, skill-based, or competency-based approaches to instruction, which learners do not find relevant to their own life experiences and the techniques learnt can seldom engage learners or serve their needs.

Changes in workplace learning concepts. Katz (2000) points out that many workplace language training programs in the past became overly concerned with "'retooling workers" since employees' skills and knowledge, including language and demeanor, were perceived as being in need of repair. He contends that businesses in both manufacturing and service sectors attempted to implement language programs that went beyond the goal of language acquisition and learning to communicate in the workplace context; some programs actively attempted to shape how employees talk and interact with one another and with managers and customers.

In recent years, however, a number of scholars have found fault with such simplistic notions of language learning. For example, workplace literacy scholar Glynda Hull (as cited in

Katz, 2000) criticizes the traditional notions of learning language for skills as "notions of generality and neutral technique" (p. 17), and the mistaken assumption that "once mastered, these skills can and will be used in any context for any purpose" (p. 17). She contents that such simplistic assumptions overlook the fact that in practice skills are always defined with reference to some socially defined version of what constitutes competence. Katz (2000) notes that current researchers emphasize how language use is intimately connected to social identities, and that skills and language use, in particular, must always be understood in relation to social and discursive contexts and purposes.

Wong (1998) conducted a study on the experience of immigrants who had completed a health care aide training program that combined occupational skills with the health program. She found that the training program had a major impact on the employment, identities, and settlement of the immigrant participants, and "the skills and language training improved the employment prospects of the individuals" (p. 3). According to Wong (1998), many participants also spoke of the importance of learning job-search skills and the personal significance of having an occupational identity. Moreover, "the successful completion of the program increased the self-confidence and autonomy of the individuals, which in turn aided their settlement and integration into Canadian society" (p. 4).

Based on the study, Wong (1998) identified two major aspects of workplace learning that are necessary for the integration of immigrants into the workforce. First, vocational ESL (VESL) for the workplace includes programs which aim to improve learners' integration of language and skill. These programs include: Immigrant Settlement Adaptation Program (ISAP), Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC), and English as a Second Language Programs (ESL). These popular language programs are funded by various social service organizations (Settlement for Newcomers, 2006). The other programs or workshops focus on immigrant settlement and identity issues, and address entry into the workforce, identities within family and

society, and language and training. The most intensive ones for the immigrants' professional development and training (Settlement for Newcomers, 2006) are Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS), Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP), Host Program (HP), and Job Search Workshops for Newcomers (JSW).

According to Wong (1998), the language curriculum of VESL is designed to improve L2 learners' English language competence. The core curriculum, emphasizing fluency and listening comprehension and designed to be adapted to various job types and industries, is developed from surveys of employers and supervisors concerning the kinds of language and language usage skills needed at the worksite (p. 8). On the other hand, workplace training focuses on the techniques and equipment specific to immigrants' jobs. In addition to the language skills, VESL programs also aim to promote learners' understanding of the host culture. Workshops or settlement programs usually emphasize strategies to help immigrants integrate cultural differences in a pluralistic society by providing career training, professional skills development and building up a social network.

In a review of how the changing demographics of the U.S. workforce shape learning at work, Bierema (2003) asserts that since most immigrants work for pay during their lifetime, the workplace becomes a significant context for learning "language, values, cultures, and social norms that coalesce into the complex sociocultural system of work" (p. 12). Therefore, workplace learning is an important dimension of immigrants' language and culture learning.

This chapter reviewed the literature on the second language learning theories which address the important variables that influence L2 learners' SLA. Theories on second culture learning provide a theoretical framework for integrating second language learning and second culture learning. The major variables in the contexts of second culture and second language learning are also emphasized in the review of the literature. However, there has been little research on learners' experiences of second culture and second language learning in the target

culture and on what these experiences mean to them. The next chapter focuses on the research

design and methodology for data collection, analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design and Methodology

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions that recent Chinese immigrants from mainland China in the Skilled Worker Class have of their experiences of learning English as a Second Language and their perceptions of culture learning in a predominantly English society, Canada.

Design

The primary purpose of qualitative research is to understand the behavior, values and meaning of any given individual (or group) within a cultural context (Walford, 2001). Patton (2002) explains that qualitative study enables researchers to "focus on what people experience and how they interpret the world (in which case one can use interviews without actually experiencing the phenomenon oneself)" (p. 70).

Since this study investigated a group of Chinese immigrants' perceptions of learning ESL and English culture in a predominantly English society, qualitative inquiry was an appropriate design to explore the three research questions. It enabled the researcher to collect data on the participants' perceptions in their own words.

Timeframe. Data collection took place in late February 2004 and March 2004.

Setting. Data collection took place in Toronto, Ontario, where there is a large Chinese population.

Sample. The sample consisted of six recent Chinese immigrants who had immigrated to Canada in the Skilled Worker Class within the past three years. Criteria for the section of the sample included:

- Immigration to Canada within the preceding three years in the Skilled Worker Class
- A range of occupations
- A mix of males and females

- A range of marital/ family status

Methodology

The primary method of data collection was the interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) suggests that one effective way of collecting data in qualitative research is to interview people so that the researcher can find out those things that cannot be directly observed. Patton describes three basic approaches to collecting qualitative data through open-ended interviews: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. The informal conversational interview "relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of an interaction" (p. 342), and it is often applied as part of ongoing participant observations in the field. The general interview guide approach "involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins" (p. 342). It serves as a checklist for the researcher during the interview to make sure that all the relevant topics will be covered. In contrast, "the standardized open-ended interview consists of a set of questions carefully worded and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (Patton, 2002, p. 342).

In this study, the interview guide approach (Appendix A) was selected to "ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed (Patton, 2000, p. 343)". Moreover, it can "make sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation" (Patton, 2000, p. 343). The interview guide is included as Appendix A.

The interviews were held in a place mutually agreeable to participants and interviewer. Each interview took approximately sixty minutes, and all interviews were audiotaped, and later transcribed. Meanwhile, the researcher kept a process log throughout the data collection and analysis phases of the study to record field notes, the process of decision making, and ongoing theoretical reflections.

Research Process

Entry. Participants were recruited through snowball sampling, a technique for finding research subjects. In a study on how to recruit research participants, Atkinson and Flint (2001) find that the first subject usually will provide the researcher the name of another subject, who in turn provides the name of a third, and so on. This strategy can take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). Atkinson and Flint (2001) assert that snowball sampling can be applied when "the aim of a study is primarily explorative, qualitative and descriptive since it can offer practical advantages" (p. 7). Most frequently, snowball sampling is used to conduct qualitative research, primarily through interviews.

Data collection. The sites for the audiotape interviews were arranged at the convenience of the participants. One interview took place in the participant's private office. One was conducted in a restaurant without any disturbance. Two were conducted in a quiet seminar room at the university which provided privacy without interruptions. Two interviews were done in the participants' homes.

Before each interview, the researcher explained to participants the purpose of the study and ethical considerations, asked them to read the cover letter (Appendix B) and invited them to sign the consent form (Appendix C). The recorded interviews were transcribed by the researcher and the transcriptions made available to the researcher and the thesis supervisor only. The researcher kept a process log to record the research process, decision-making, and emerging patterns and reflections. The process log served as both a record of events as well as a device to facilitate decision-making as the work progressed. After each interview, the tapes were transcribed and the digital record was transferred to computer and saved as sound files.

Data analysis. The constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) was used to analyze the data to determine patterns and themes. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) describe the

constant comparative method as "a research design for multi-data sources, which is like analytic induction in that the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data collection" (p. 66). Data analysis was ongoing through data collection. Data were coded after each interview was transcribed. Then the content analysis included identifying codes, categories and themes that emerged from the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003).

The example below illustrates how the data were analyzed and coded. This is an excerpt from the transcript of Jenny's interview:

> Chinese people value friends, family, Chinese value collective ideas and family very much, but I feel western culture is based on the individualism, so it's quite different.

This piece of data was coded as "culture difference" because it explains the participant's perception of the culture difference between her mother country and Canada. Data with this code were then placed into the category of 'Culture awareness and culture identity', which covered data that indicated how the participants adapted themselves to a new culture – a predominantly English culture in Canada.

Formal analysis of the data did not take place until data collection was complete (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). ATLAS.ti, a software program for qualitative data analysis, was used in the process of analyzing data in this study. After data collection was complete and the preliminary codes were defined, the transcripts and preliminary codes were input into ATLAS.ti. The data were also coded in ATLAS.ti. During the process of coding, the preliminary codes were modified, the identified categories were also input into ATLAS.ti and codes were grouped into the categories in ATLAS.ti. After codes were assigned to categories, these categories were clustered around themes, which corresponded to the research questions. Table 1 displays the categories and themes developed in this study and provides an example of each category.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent. The purpose of the study and ethical considerations were explained to each participant before the interview was conducted. All participants were advised of the

following considerations related to informed consent: risks/benefits, anonymity and confidentiality, right to withdraw, storage of data, and dissemination of results. They were then invited to participate and asked to sign a letter of informed consent (see Appendix B).

In summary, this chapter described the design of the study, methodology, research process and ethical considerations. The next chapter presents the findings and discusses the interpretation of the study.

Themes	Categories	Codes
1. Motivation and perceptions of English language learning	Motivation and attitudes	motivation to come/study in Canada, settlement in Canada, expectations of life in Canada
	Challenges and strategies	limited English speaking environment at one's home, difficulty in making friends; attending school, community activities, mass media
	Workplace learning	use English most of the time. chatting with coworkers and friends, co-op and workshops for new immigrants, work experience in Canada
2. Perceptions of culture learning	Culture shock	difficult to make close friends with native English speakers, conflicting issues on relationship among people, conflicting issues among different cultures
	Culture awareness and culture identity	first language and first culture, culture identity, culture issues
	Acculturation	communicate with friends or native speakers, learn English culture from school, daily life and workplace, going to churches, attending community activities
3. Language, culture and long-term goals	The positive influence of culture learning on ESL learning	better understand English and culture, the more contact and involvement in the English culture, more improvement in English
	Integrations of Chinese and English culture	recognition of culture difference, adapt the new / good part of English culture and maintain one's own culture, benefits
	Long-term goals	Career goals, life expectations and English language learning, suggestion and recommendations

Table 1. Codes, categories and themes.

CHAPTER 4

Research Findings and Interpretation

This chapter describes the findings of this study, which investigated six Chinese immigrants' perceptions of their English language learning and culture learning in a predominately English milieu. Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the various data sources: perceptions of English language learning; perceptions of culture learning; and language, culture and long-term goals.

Profiles of each participant are described in the first section. The second section describes the themes. The final section sets forth the interpretation of findings.

Participant Profiles

The six participants consisted of three males and three females. All six participants had studied English as a foreign/second language for at least ten years in China and had emigrated to Canada in the Skilled Worker category (CIC, 2002) within the previous three years. Moreover, all of them considered it very important to learn English and were willing to share their experiences and perceptions with respect to their English language learning. Following is a profile of each of the six participants. Pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity and confidentiality.

Roger. Roger is male, 34 years old and married. He completed his BA in Economics and MA in Political Economics in China. He had had nine years of work experience as an economist and trader in a state-owned petrol company in China. He had begun to study English from grade seven in secondary school and attended an ESL program in Toronto after coming to Canada. He came to Canada in August, 2003. He was completing a master's program in International Finance at Ryerson University in Toronto.

Jenny. Jenny is a single woman who had worked as an English teacher in China. She immigrated to Canada in May, 2002. After arriving in Toronto, she first attended ESL and LINC

programs. At the time of her interview, she was taking a Master of Education degree at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto, and working part-time as a waitress in a local restaurant.

Rachel. Rachel is married. She and her husband emigrated to Canada almost three years earlier. At the time of her interview, she was working as a consultant in a Newcomer's Settlement Center in Toronto. She began to learn English at an early age and obtained two undergraduate degrees, one in second language teaching, and the other one, English language and literature. Moreover, she completed a master's degree in applied linguistics in China. She had been an English language teacher for more than 10 years in China.

Mary. Mary is 31 years old and married. She and her husband had been living in Canada for three years. They had a baby son two years ago. Once an electronic technician in a provincial television station in China for eight years, she was working as a TV editor in a local TV station in Toronto at the time of her interview. She studied English in school for more than 10 years and completed her undergraduate program in Electronic Communication in China. She attended ESL programs in Toronto after arrival and studied there for almost half a year.

John. John is a married man in his mid-40s. He began studying English in China 20 years ago. He worked as a senior software programmer in China for over 10 years. He arrived in Canada in 2001 and his wife and four-year-old daughter came after in 2002. After coming to Canada, he attended LINC and ESL programs for one month, respectively. He did his bachelor's and master's degrees in Computer Applications in China. He was working as a senior software programmer for a computer company.

Nathan. Nathan moved to Canada in 2002 with his wife and his then two-year-old son. He obtained his bachelor's degree in Educational Technology in China, and was doing his master's in the same area in OISE/UT at the time of his interview. He started learning English when he was 16 years old. He was working as a library technician in the university part-time.

Research Findings

Three themes emerged from the analysis of the data: Chinese immigrants' motivation and perceptions of their English language learning; Chinese immigrants' perceptions of culture learning; and language, culture and long-term goals. Each is discussed below.

Perceptions of English language learning

The six participants had been in Canada for almost three years. Despite the differences in their genders, ages, and educational backgrounds and work experience, they had something in common in terms of their English language learning experience. Three aspects of their English language learning experience are discussed below: motivation and attitudes; challenges and strategies; and workplace learning.

Motivation and attitudes. The six participants' motivation and attitudes toward English language learning varied in several aspects. The participants acknowledged that it was only after they had arrived Canada that they began to understand their actual level of knowledge and proficiency in English. All had learned English for more than 10 years in China. However, after they started to have direct contact within a predominately English society, they became aware of the gap between their English proficiency and that of native English speakers. Consequently, they found that the primary obstacle for them to settle in this new land was their level of proficiency in the English language. Therefore, the primary motivation for them to pursue English language learning was their eagerness to settle in Canada.

When asked what motivated her to study English in Canada, Jenny's response was that, "to learn English is the basic preparation and that's very important" (Jenny, p. 10). She also suggested that the more proficient her language became, the more communicative she would be, which in turn would enable her to adjust more to her academic program and build up her self-esteem:

> I feel that the harder I learned, the more communicative I became. Because I have to speak, talk something important or valuable as a non-English speaker especially in an academic

environment. You've got to say something valuable, you can't speak only nonsense, and you know something under beneath the surface, people will respect you when your words are of valuable information. Don't take the classroom discussion as your English practice. (p. 12)

For Mary, though, the motivation to learn English came directly from the hardship she had experienced during her family's first settlement in Toronto. She remembered the days when she did not know where and how to apply for a health card, driver's license or social insurance card. She described herself as "anxious," "sad," "frustrated" at that time, and that was the initial reason why she took English classes soon after her arrival in Canada.

> I don't know, I just can't understand other people, I guess it's because what we learned in China is textbook English, and sometimes even I know the words, I need a while to think about it in Chinese then I can understand, so... you really don't know how hard and anxious I was then? So we went to LINC and ESL, we had some chances to speak English although our speaking was still very poor...LINC classes teach us something about daily life activities, like how to open bank books, how to talk to doctors, or you know, lots of things like that, I think that's helpful. (p. 18)

Roger remembered that when he had first arrived in Canada, he found his English was not good enough to communicate with Canadians. Sometimes he had difficulty in expressing himself or understanding what others were saying. In order to obtain important information on settlement and obtain his identification cards, he went to LINC classes and a social assistance agency:

> Yes, first there is lot of information here, that's more than in China. You have to get information to survive here, you have to read, you have to listen to TV, radio to get information. Otherwise; you will be in trouble. (p. 33)

When John first arrived in Canada, he came by himself. He said that his plan was to establish the basics first so that his family could join him later on. Therefore, the motivation to learn English was very strong and he had to immerse himself in the society as soon as possible:

> You know, I just came here by myself first. My strategies are that first I came here, and after half a year, my family can come here. So if I can find a job, that's ok. Now that I came here myself I got lot of time, first I just go to LINC, right. And I bought TV, I bought radio from China, I tried everything. And what I want to do is first, you know, just listen. First, I have to improve my listening, then try to understand. (p. 54)

Nathan recalled that when he had first arrived in Canada, he had thought his English was far from satisfactory and he couldn't understand other people at all. So he decided to learn English immediately:

> So I have to learn English to settle down first. We had a little baby at that time, and we had to go to so many places to get everything done, health card, SIN card, banks, hospital, and day-care center… my wife and I was so worried about our language, and I was desperate to learn English. That was a hard time. (p. 76)

Rachel was an English teacher in China for many years. Before she came to Canada, she thought that her English should be proficient enough; however, it turned out to be a different story:

> Yes, personally, I am always feeling good about myself, confident about myself. But I found it very hard from the very beginning. Even I spent so much time on the language for all these years, it's still hard for me to express myself like as fluently as the native speakers, it's so hard, it's too hard. Uh, when I first came here, like… for the oral communication, if it's daily life base, it's ok, I didn't feel difficult like in the street, in the store, in the supermarket, I communicate with people in the community center, I didn't feel very hard… but if it was a situation like job application, then it was hard. So I went to ESL classes. (p. 100)

Apart from settlement in Canada, the participants were also anxious to find jobs and support themselves. Therefore, the second factor which motivated them to learn sufficient English was to earn a living in Canada.

Jenny mentioned that she worked as a waitress in a restaurant and had to talk to customers from different ethnic groups. Sometimes it was quite a challenge for her:

> That is a Chinese-owned but is a Thai style, serving many from Canadians to Indians, East Europeans, all kinds of people. And as you know, Toronto is an immigrants' city, so you have to understand different accents, and that's hard. (p. 4)

Searching for work was very frustrating for Mary. Despite her extensive work experience in the TV industry in China, she could not get a job in Toronto for a long time. She said that the major reason was her poor English. At the time of the study, she worked for a Chinese TV station:

> My husband and I are both working in the TV station for a long time, so we think that to find a job in TV stations here might be easy. But in reality, it's really, really hard. I actually

didn't get a job for more than one year because you know, my English is not good, and it's very hard to find a job in the mass media because we have no Canadian experience even we can do much better than the Canadians, and they think, if you can't speak good English, you can not do a good job. (p. 19)

John found that English was "the most important key here, and only when you acquired good English, will you have good life here" (p. 60). He also emphasized that English was indispensable with his work:

You have to use English because you have to communicate with your peers, right? And sometimes you have to communicate with your customers. Now my job is not only the developer, and I work in the Support Department, you know, sometimes, you have to communicate with the customer. Of course, my job is focus on the codes, and other supports have to talk to the customers, they are not programmers, they just know how to set up the application and how to do it. But I have to read the source codes, if they cannot solve the problem, they will assign that problem to me, for me to review. For me, sometimes, I have to talk to the customers, to my peers because I want to know more information. (p. 60)

Nathan had quite a few interviews for positions which were close matches with his expertise and work experience; but, he did not get any job offers. When he spoke about the impact of language ability on finding professional jobs, he felt that the major reason for his not getting a professional job was poor English:

There are two sides of the problem. First, the interviewer did not want me because of my bad English. Although they said my English was good enough and understandable. But if they got two persons who have the same academic ability, language would be an important issue. Second, bad language also affected my answering to the academic interview questions or to "show off" my own ability. If the interviews had been conducted in Chinese, I could have answered the academic questions very clear and very well. But, they were in English. (p. 94)

English language learning was a lengthy process for the participants. Despite their strong motivation and positive attitudes, they all encountered challenges as they developed proficiency in English.

Challenges and strategies. Although the participants were living in a predominate English society, they found that opportunities for them to learn English were not as great as they had expected. The biggest issue was the access to communicate with English native speakers.

All participants received English language education in Canada. Although the length of

their study varied from several months to two years, their perceptions of the language courses and/or degree courses were similar.

Jenny and Nathan were both enrolled in Master of Education programs. They admitted that their programs helped them on an academic level, but did not seem to enable them to improve their oral proficiency in English. Jenny viewed the program as "a great way for my reading and writing skills, but it did not help me in other aspects" (p. 4):

> Because my course work is very heavy, and I can hardly find time to talk to people even in Chinese. So I only talk to people in English when I am in school, just a few hours every week. Most of the time, I have to read lots of books and write papers at home. So I seldom get a chance to actually talk to someone. (p. 5)

As for the classroom discussions, she said she hardly participated in them and did not know how to express herself in public:

> I feel very frustrated at the very beginning the great pressure when I couldn't catch up the speakers, especially when the classmates are talking about something, something culturally or something locally, I have no background about that, also there are, I think there are some disadvantages for me because I can't adjust to be, I am not so accustom to their accents, I feel that is the real issue which makes me feel frustrated. (Jenny, p. 4)

Nathan's experience was similar to Jenny's. Initially he could not keep up with the professors and could not understand different accents of his classmates. What was more frustrating was that he could not express himself well in front of the class:

> Once I gave presentation in my class, but I would not say that is a presentation at all, because I can not say English in a whole sentence. I think first my language is not so good, that is the first and important thing, the other reason is that I was nervous, at that time. And the bad... I mean, at first, when I was standing there, I was nervous already, and I started to say something to others, I found that they couldn't understand, and sometimes I just can not continue to say, I don't know what kind of words to use, how to express my ideas. At that time, I feel more nervous. (p. 80)

In addition, he was critical that the program offered too many on-line courses. These prevented students from gaining pportunities to communicate orally with other students:

> I took four on-line courses in total and the students had no other choices. But I don't like them and I will not take on-line courses any more, because on-line courses only improve your writing skills and reading skills, but can not improve oral skills. If you want to find a job here, you have to improve your communication ability. (p. 84)

All six participants had participated in at least one of either the LINC or ESL programs, but their evaluations of the language programs were far from satisfactory. They all complained that the programs did not help them too much and that the learning environments did not enable them to improve their oral English.

> I think to some degree, yes. After some time, I think, we get used to listening to people here, and in LINC and ESL, we had some chances to speak English although our speaking was still very poor. But in most classes, the teachers focus a lot on grammar. I think most of Chinese students learned lots of grammar in China, in schools all the time. (Mary, p. 18)

> But other than that, LINC or ESL classes can hardly improve your language skills because they only provide basic knowledge for new immigrants, such as the social information. Apart from that, I didn't learn anything else there. Also there are so many students in one room, but only the teacher can speak perfect English, we just listen, that's it. (Roger, p. 34)

> But only the teacher is Canadian, I mean native speaker, all the classmates are just like us, we are at the same level, a lot of them are from China, we often talk in Chinese during the breaks, and you know you can't learn a lot if they are just, how to I don't mean they are not good, but their speaking is just as poor as mine. (John, p. 54)

Apart from the limited opportunities to practice English in the courses, the participants admitted that their Chinese lifestyles and social circles were a barrier to learning English effectively.

The six participants realized that they were basically maintaining their Chinese lifestyles and barely spoke English at home at all. Jenny and Roger tried to talk to their partners in English, "but it didn't work out" (Jenny, p. 6); they reported: "we feel so weird to speak English to each other" (Roger, p. 23). Nathan and John had to speak Chinese at home because they wanted their children to learn Chinese and preserve the Chinese culture. John said that his daughter had been here for just two years and had almost abandoned Chinese language and culture completely:

> Yes, they (John's family) come here for two years. And she (John's daughter) has totally forgotten China, even when we ask her, "would you go back to China"? "No, I don't like Chinese. I don't want to go to China". You know, there are some games between Canada and China, she will yell with Canada, instead of China. (John, p. 68)

Nathan, whose son was only four years old, thought it was very important for him and his wife to speak Chinese at home because that was the only way their son could maintain Chinese

language and culture:

> But I am so worried about his Chinese. Now he is still small and can listen to us. When kids grow bigger, they don't want to speak in Chinese. That's happening to most second generation here. And I don't want one day my son will just speak English to me, so my wife and I try to talk to him in Chinese and send him to Chinese classes on the weekend. (Nathan, p. 84)

Chinese was not only the dominant language in the home, and the participants also admitted that their social circles were within the Chinese community. They did not have any opportunities to speak English when socializing with their friends since "everybody was Chinese". (Roger, p. 35)

When asked in what ways they could improve their English language proficiency, all six participants noted that they would like to make friends with Canadians and other native English speakers. In reality, few of them had achieved that goal, and all admitted that it was hard to make friends with people from other cultural backgrounds:

> Unfortunately I didn't choose any native speakers as my friends, and there are lots of regrets for that. (Jenny, p. 3)

> I seldom use English except when we go out, but that is just very simple English, and we actually don't have any chances going out now, let alone to make any friends. All friends we have here are people we knew from back home. I don't even know how to chat with Canadians. (Mary, p. 24)

Apart from the Chinese lifestyles and social circles, John also felt that thinking in Chinese was an obstacle for him to learn English:

> We feel comfortable to speak Chinese, and we don't need to think. You know, when we need to speak English, we still have some problems to think in Chinese first, and then translate it into English. We can not quit that kind of habit. If we can not quit it, we have to speak, you know, we feel better to speak Chinese. (p. 62)

Mary had the same learning experience as John did:

> I don't know, I just can't understand other people, I guess it's because what we learned in China is textbook English, and sometimes even I know the words, I need a while to think about it in Chinese then I can understand. Same as when I want to speak English, I have to think in Chinese first, then find a word in English, so I usually speak "Chinglish". (p. 17)

When asked what strategies they had taken to overcome the challenges, every participant

put watching TV and listening to radio on the top of the list. Jenny said that she would watch TV and, after class, she would find classmates to chat and talk about the programs (Jenny, p. 4). Roger used TV and radio as a way to learn about Canadian society and gain information to survive here (p. 33). John said the first thing he did right after arriving in Canada was to buy a TV because that's the only way he could listen to the native speakers and improve his listening comprehension. John also mentioned that listening to radio and reading magazines were good ways to learn English (John, p. 65).

Rogers was studying economics at a local university. According to him, university education made a significant change in his English learning. It not only enabled him to improve his reading and writing skills, but presented him opportunities to practice his knowledge:

> And the program is really helpful in term of my professional development. You see, we have to write a lot of the projects, like financial analysis or enterprise plan, so a lot of the terms will get involved, and I've found they are very challenging and interesting. I love them, very practical. (p. 35)

Attending English classes seemed to be very helpful for Mary and Nathan as well:

> Like most new immigrants here, we went to LINC and ESL for several months. And we tried to learn as much as possible at that time. There are lots of exercises in the class. Sometimes we need to remember the new words, sometimes, we have to write journals. The teachers focus most on reading and writing, and I think that's good. (Mary, p. 17)

> The writing courses, I think one of the writing courses is about the grammar, and it is called grammar, but actually it's not kinda of grammar we were taught in China, so I found it very useful and all the others are about how to write academic papers, and how to improve the academic vocabulary. For me, they are really helpful. I am quite confident now in academic writing, which is very important for my future career. (Nathan, p. 82)

Apart from school education, Rachel recommended that getting involved in the community activities was the best way to learn English language and about Canadian society:

> I prepared well, and you know, I volunteered, but for most Chinese people, they are not used to volunteering and don't know how important it is, that's my knowledge from the past study. I volunteered to teach Chinese for Canadians, which was a great way for me to communicate with native speakers. Also I like attending community activities, like the one held last Thanksgiving, so I now know how our neighbors celebrate the holiday, and I even met the local counselor there. It's just a wonderful chance to get into the society and know what is going on in this country. But most Chinese didn't realize that, and they don't know the benefits of volunteering. (p. 109)

John also improved his English rapidly through volunteering in a senior's home. According to

John, talking to and taking care of the seniors were good opportunities for him to improve his

oral English as well as to learn or became familiar with the Canadian social system. John had

been working as a volunteer for a senior's home for two years, and his primary job was to

accompany the seniors and talk to them. But he said that was only a way to learn English and his

friends were all Chinese (John, p. 60):

> So every Saturday I go to the Golden Tutor and talked with senior people. And I
> found that is very good because, you know, the old people are very lonely here, they want
> to talk to somebody, but no Canadians will have the patience and time to talk to them. But
> for me, it's good since I need to learn the language. And of course, I learned a lot more than
> just language. (p. 55)

Workplace learning. The participants had worked as professionals in various fields in

China. After settling in Canada, they attended various English classes and educational programs

in the hopes of finding professional jobs in Canada. The section below describes their work

experience in Canada and their English learning in the workplace.

Jenny worked as a part-time waitress in a Thai restaurant. Although it was different from

her teaching job back in China, she found it very helpful:

> One thing is that I now can understand various accents and can talk to different people. Plus
> when you work, even it's only a waitress job, you get an idea how to collaborate with your
> co-workers and your boss, of course. Professional and academic learning. (p. 3)

She also took several workshops organized by local social service organizations. Although she

did not get a professional job, she still valued the learning experience:

> After graduation I have to find a job to support myself and find something, something that
> is not what I must do, but I like to do. But I did go to several workshops here in downtown
> Toronto. All they do is to hand out some info on how to find relevant jobs. Also they teach
> you to write resume, cover letters. Although I learned those back in China, but here it's
> different, it's more specific about the job requirements, and you can give them your resume
> so the instructor will polish for you. And if there is any chance, they can recommend you to
> some company. (p. 7)
> But I only went there in summer time. I think it will be very helpful in the near future.
> When I finish this program, I want to go back there and learn more about the job hunting
> skills. (p. 7)

Mary found that, although workshops could not offer you a job directly, they did help participants with basic job-seeking skills and improved their English writing:

> En, oh, they also offered some workshops, like how to write a resume, how to making calls with the companies, or how to attend interviews, I think they are useful skills. Although they don't really help you to get a job, they provide lots of activities like interview role plays, public presentations to help you. Besides they will help us correct our resume or cover letter... sometimes, you know, if your major is good, like computer or engineering, there are lots of big companies, so sometimes, the workshops can recommend you there, but it all depends. (p. 22)

Mary later got a job offer with a local Chinese TV station, and thus still communicated with co-workers in Chinese. However, she had to read and write some memos in English and used editing programs in English:

> Basically, I need to use English everyday because the work log has to be done in English. And, let me think, the programs we are using, like AVID, NON-LINEAR are all in English. But that's it. I know some technical terms, but I told you that it's a Chinese TV station and everybody there is from China ...and a lot of them don't understand Mandarin, so I only speak English with people from Hongkong. Of course, they speak with an accent as well, but it's fine, at least we can understand each other. (p. 22)

As discussed earlier, John worked as a computer programmer in a IT company. He took workplace learning not only as an approach to assist his English language learning, but, more importantly, for his professional improvement. He believed that his English proficiency was steadily improving:

> Currently, yeah, I think I am getting better and better. I try to talk to my co-workers during the break time and see how they use some terms or codes. Then when a customer phones in, I will try to use the words my colleagues teach me. In this way, I think the customers can understand me better, and less confusions. I would say 90 per cent of the time, I am quite confident at work. It's my job, you know. (p. 62)

Rachel worked in various jobs as a Chinese teacher, volunteer for a community centre, and free-lance interpreter. Currently working as a consultant in a Newcomers' Settlement Centre, she pointed out that her workplace learning would no longer be limited to improving English language proficiency, but had extended to understanding the whole social work system:

> I tried very hard to adapt to the new life here. The job that I am working now is the consultant for new immigrants, so basically, we provide general information for immigrants from all around world, of course, many of them are from China. But my clients

come from various countries, so I have to speak English most of the time. Moreover, I have to write reports everyday, and discuss some issues with my director, colleagues. You know, for me, it's no longer language itself, I have to understand how this system is working, and what my professional goal would be. (p. 102)

Apart from English language learning, the participants found that another important aspect of learning experience in Canada is about the culture learning.

Perceptions of culture learning

The second theme describes the Chinese immigrants' perceptions of culture learning. The participants' culture learning experiences included culture shock, cultural awareness and culture identity, and acculturation. Each aspect will be discussed below.

Culture shock. All six participants described some experiences of culture shock. When settling in a predominantly English culture, they experienced feelings of frustration, loneliness, and fear. For instance, when asked her perceptions of her English language proficiency, Jenny expressed her low self-esteem:

"I am afraid (I am) lower than average from the very beginning, because I can't adjust myself very, very fluently to the various accents" (p. 3).

As discussed earlier, Jenny indicated that she felt frustrated when experiencing culture shock, and, as a result of the impact of the culture shock, she mentioned her negative attitude toward the native English speakers and the society in general:

Unfortunately I didn't choose any native speakers as my friends, and there are lots of regrets for that. (p. 3)

Perhaps partly that's my own fault, I didn't go out very often, I didn't contact with people. I didn't try. But Toronto is the worst place, people are real realistic and they are very indifferent toward Chinese people, I can understand everybody is living under pressure, psychologically or emotionally pressure, but as a new immigrant, I feel more unbearable. (p. 9)

Mary also expressed feelings of fear and loneliness when her family had first arrived in Canada:

That was the worst time we had experienced here. I don't even, how to say, dare to go out, I feel so disappointed with myself because I can not even understand the easiest, I mean the most simple words, like the daily life greetings or, all the simple things.... (p. 17)

Meanwhile, Mary found that her negative feelings towards the English culture had not only

deterred her from learning more English, but also discouraged her from socializing with other

people:

> Well, just now I told you that I am so afraid to go outside or talk to Canadians. Before I
> have the baby, and I had no job, we sometimes go to church and talk to people there, but it's
> only, you know, greetings, like hello, just very surface English, not like the real talking, and
> we don't really have the same belief, so we gave up after a while, now since we have the
> baby, we have no where to go. Even to watch TV is impossible, but we will just open TV
> after coming back. (p. 22)

Other participants dealt with culture shock in different ways. Roger admitted that he

encountered many obstacles in daily life which resulted from lack of understanding English

language and culture, but he was quite optimistic:

> There is lot of trouble here. For instance, you gonna talk to police, if you don't know how
> to deal with policeman, you'll be in trouble. And if you don't know how to deal with the
> banks, you will be in trouble, you don't know how to deposit money, to use the money,
> how to get most out of it … There is unpleasant experience, but we usually avoid that kind
> of situation. I mean, we know that there is kinda of culture differences. We have to do our
> best to avoid the awkward situations. (p. 33)

However, he also realized that culture shock played a big part in his adapting to the society:

> You have to observe some regulations, some institutions here. You have to observe them
> because if you use what you've brought from China, there's gonna to be some problems.
> For instance, we would like to say "hello, have you eaten"? I don't think it's practical here.
> And surely there are some different expressions. (p. 35)

When asked if he had had any opportunities to socialize with English-speaking Canadians,

Roger indicated that culture shock was a big concern:

> Sometimes, you will find it difficult to get into because they are talking totally different
> things you shouldn't understand, or sometimes somebody will approach you, and they will
> talk about whatever they are familiar with, but you don't really know. (p. 36)

Overall, all the six participants observed that culture shock occurred in every aspect of their

lives: in the street, at school, in the community center, and at workplace. However, they also

realized that to learn English culture and to be aware of the culture differences would definitely

be an asset to adjusting to life in Toronto, Canada.

Culture awareness and culture identity. Through immersion in a predominantly English

culture society in Canada, the participants developed and fostered understanding and

appreciation of the new culture and their first culture. Through their daily activities in their

communities, schools, and workplaces, they learned not only to be aware of cultural variables,

but also to reflect on their own cultural identities.

In terms of the educational system, three of the six participants admitted that there were

tremendous differences between Canadian and Chinese institutions. Nathan found that the

whole teaching methodology was different. He described his first day of university orientation:

> It was so impressive that on that the first day I came here to attend the orientation for the new students, and, and I mean the style is different. I mean in China we also have this kind of orientation, but the contents are totally different. Of course in China all the leader came here and (told students), "work hard, work hard, work hard". But the first day I came here, the dean of the university came and said, "Don't work hard". Yeah, that's another thing. The very impressing one is that in China we spent a lot of time in studying all kinds of regulations. Yes, but here, no, there isn't anyone who talked about, "don't do this or that", actually till now I didn't find any. (p. 85)

Jenny commented on the different learning behaviors between Canadian students and Chinese

students, based on her university study experience in both countries:

> As a student, Canadians tend to be much more of themselves, for new ideas, for independent thinking, well as the Chinese student, the most important thing is to listen to the teacher or pass the examination. (p. 11)

Roger explained the consequences of the goals under different educational systems:

> There are differences [in educational system], knowledge is different. Chinese education is to prepare you to work for socialist China, not for the Capitalist Canada, so the knowledge structure is totally different.... The basic stuff is the same thing, but you know, some knowledge, some advanced techniques, some systematic strategies here, you study here is going to be used to copy with the international, especially multi-national corporations. It's very different level. (p. 36)

Apart from the differences between the educational systems, values emerged as one of the

greatest culture differences. According to the participants, Chinese people focused more on

friendship and family, were more conservative, and believed in collectivism. Canadian people

paid more attention to personal feelings and privacy. The core ideology here is individualism.

For example, Jenny mentioned that, in different cultures, there are different values:

> Chinese people value friends, family, Chinese value collective ideas and family very much, but I feel western culture is based on the individualism, so it's quite different. (p. 7)

Mary believed that Canadians were more outspoken about their feelings than Chinese people:

> The other thing is that, you know, when people praise you, we always feel, you know, very shy, even when they praise our baby, "how lovely your son is", we will just smile and not to say anything, but when we say their baby is so cute or lovely, they would be very happy and say, "Yes, she is an angel, or she is most beautiful girl", so I think that's the culture difference. We Chinese people seldom, you know, get used to accepting the good words or praising, but they are so different. (p. 25)

Rachel explained that how Chinese people and Canadians approached job hunting:

> Uh… like in job searching, here you need to do marketing for yourself. You always put 'excellent', 'wonderful', 'remarkable', 'strong', the words you will never used back home in China, right? You will never use them describe yourself in front of the employer, you can say 'I am good', 'I am confident', and 'this is my qualification', you can say 'I am qualified', but you will never say 'I am very excellent'. Yes, they (Canadians) will praise themselves, sometimes, you can say exaggerate a little bit is acceptable, even if you are exaggerate a little bit, they would say it's acceptable, even if you are exaggerating, we suppose that you are confident. But you do that in China, people will laugh at you. (p. 103)

She also thought that Canadians and Chinese differed in the ways they handled finances:

> I will never spend money like Canadians. I will keep my own way, even if, how long I will live here, I will still keep them. Yes, like I use credit card, but I never really borrow any money from the bank. Whenever I got the money, I will return it to the card, just gain some point or credit, or reward from using the card, but I never borrow the money and pay the interests (p. 110).

Despite the culture differences that the participants had experienced and perceived in Canada, the participants all believed that their first culture best reflected their identities. Mary mentioned that her family's social circle was still within the Chinese community in Toronto. Moreover, both she and her husband thought that it was much easier to make friends within the same or similar culture background:

> We only have Chinese friends, most of them are colleagues in China, like your husband, and John, we used to be friends in TV station, and some friends here, but they are all Chinese. And my husband said that in the station, if you are Chinese, you will make Chinese friends; if you are from India, all of your friends will be Indians. (p. 25)

When being asked about if a Canadian passport would change their views of culture identity, all six participants provided a negative answer:

> I haven't thought about that, but I guess for the travel freedom around the world, I probably will get Canadian citizenship but that doesn't mean I feel much more different being a

Chinese. Once a Chinese, you will always be a Chinese. (Jenny, p. 10)

I think that's not a big problem, we will definitely get a Canadian citizenship since we have planned to live here, but that doesn't mean we are not Chinese any more. Well, it's simple, even we have Canadian passport, we can, still not enter their society, I mean, we are still Chinese in their eyes, and our Chinese is still Chinese English, don't you think? And when we are together, we still speak Chinese, so what's the difference? The only difference is that when we are Canadians, we can go to lots of places, and we don't need visa, but the thing is that when we go back to China, we need to apply for Chinese visa, which is very troublesome. (Mary, p. 28)

Canada sacrifices a lot for the immigration policy, for the sake of boosting the economics and economical activities. So of course getting a Canadian citizenship is one of the goals. But it will never mean that I am not a Chinese anymore, I mean, no matter which passport I hold, I will always be a Chinese and I am proud of that. (Roger, p. 48)

Maybe if you get Canadian citizenship, sometimes, it's easier for you, you know, you can go to America, you can go to other parts of the world. It's much easier for you, right? But I have not thought that I should give up, you know, Chinese. But in my heart, I always feel that I am Chinese. (John, p. 69)

I don't know, it's hard to say. Yes, actually before my coming to Canada, I think after three years, I definitely will get the Canadian citizenship, but after these years, I changed a little, I am not sure about that because sometimes I feel citizenship seems meaningless for me at all, doesn't matter. (Nathan, p. 93)

Well, I am a Chinese, I will always be Chinese, it doesn't matter whether I get Canadian citizenship or not...you are yellow, you are Chinese, my eyes. I never feel shamed or feel personal appearance is different from other people. I am totally a Chinese, my skin or my hair, right? (Rachel, p. 110)

In general, the participants had all experienced culture shock and were learning the culture differences between their first culture and the English-speaking culture. Over time, they found themselves adapting to the predominant English culture society.

Acculturation. In this study, the six participants had all been living in Canada for almost three years, and they had first-hand contact with the local culture. Through continuous culture learning and culture exchange, they were experiencing the process of social adaptation and acculturation.

Five of the participants understood the term "culture learning" at the time of their interviews. For instance, John found language learning and culture learning were inseparable from one another:

> Compared to two years ago, I feel that I have more confident in myself not only because I can speak better English, but because I know more about the people here, the society, and the educational system. I think the culture learning is very important, and language is always bound with it own culture, right? (John, p. 14)

Nathan found that culture learning enabled him to learn English easier:

> I think English culture of course improve my language because it makes me understand better. And sometimes under beneath the language, you have to know what the real meaning is. For my life here especially in terms of my working, and communicating with others, another one, the culture learning, I think, en.. is very helpful. Any language is based on its own culture, same thing, so many foreigners go to China to learn Chinese, they have to see the culture first, understand what is happening here, then they can learn the language. (Nathan, p. 91)

Mary, however, said that she had never heard of the term and did not realize the learning process was happening in daily life, but she realized that culture played an important role in her daily life:

> Well, I never thought about that, I don't know if it's culture learning, but I feel that the more I understand their culture, I can understand their, I mean westerners' life the better, but I do think that culture really helps me learn English. Now at least I know some Canadian culture, like hockey, baseball. For me, these are all new stuff, and I am learning. Actually, I never thought about culture learning, but it does exist in everyday life, I guess, perhaps it's necessary to add something about their culture into our English study. I don't know. (p. 27)

Meantime, Mary expressed the concern that she hadn't made too much progress in improving her English proficiency and that she would never be acculturated to the mainstream society.

> I worry a lot, but I have no way, and what can I do? My husband and I speak only, we only speak Chinese. I seldom have chance to talk with Canadian, and well, sometimes I feel regretful or meaningless coming here, but there is no use regretting and we made the choice by ourselves. (p. 25)

In terms of the forms of acculturation, all six participants mentioned Canadian holidays and traditions. However, some of them celebrated the holidays purposely as a way of learning the culture; others seemed to have no choice but to follow the rules:

> Well, I guess we celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving, National Day. Another one I don't know is tradition or custom, the National Day. (Jenny, p. 8)

> As everyone here, Christmas, Thanksgiving or other public holidays, but it is not because we want to celebrate it, it's because these are national holidays here, and everyone celebrate it, so we just take it as holiday. (Mary, p. 27)

We haven't celebrated that for two years, for consecutive two years because she is at work, and I have no time to do that… but since we are living in a totally different new world, we are celebrating all kinds of their holidays like Christmas, I think and Valentine's Day. (Roger, p. 41)

Wow, we do celebrate Christmas, Thanksgiving or Civic holiday, something like that, but that's practically because everyone else is celebrating. We don't have to go to work, so just take them as holidays. But we think the Chinese traditions are more important, especially for the kids. (John, p. 67)

Oh, a lot of (the holidays). I don't see if I can say I will celebrate with my family or not because we are affected by others, we don't have any special dinners or events between the family member, but we have to attend some festivals or events during this kind of events because the university will celebrate, sometimes I have to attend, and my son, he is in kindergarten, he is also in day care, and … And like if there is any festivals, sometimes I have to prepare something for him, like the Valentine's Day. Yes, here everyone celebrates it, in the kindergarten and day care they just exchange cards or candies, something like that, so I have to prepare those for him. Some others are like Halloween; the schools ask them to wear costumes and candies…. (Nathan, p. 89)

For the Canadian customs or traditions, I like their festivals and well, yes, all the holidays, and my family celebrate all of them. (Rachel, p. 109)

Apart from learning the culture by celebrating Canadian holidays and traditions, the participants found other ways to be interactive with the community. According to John, church was a good place to learn English and became sociable with other people:

Uh, until now, I often go to the church on Sundays. I never go to Chinese church, I go to church in order to improve my English because they are good speaker, they make good speech, you can learn from their speech, and of course you can learn something in it. You know, they can give me, sometimes, give me some confidence. So that's my way to study English. Now they just moved Saturday's service to Sundays. So if I've got the time, I will go to the church and still have some service group every Saturday evening, there will have some family meeting. A lot of people there, and then we can talk in English and make some friends. (p. 56)

As noted above, he also found that volunteer work helped him improve his English language and enhance his knowledge about local culture. Rachel also affirmed that taking part in the community activities and doing various volunteer jobs brought her many benefits:

En… for me, I think it's ok, I adapted to the culture easily, I changed myself a little bit, try to adapt to the new life in a comparative short period of time. I did lots of things at the beginning, like to do the volunteer work in the community center, teach Chinese for free for the Toronto District Education Board, and get involved in all kinds of social activities, and that's how I get used to the system here. (p. 104)

Nathan and Roger both felt that formal school education exerted a strong influence on their acculturation. Nathan observed that he was more confident in communicating with others after two years of study in the university:

> Yes. I actually do found that the two-year master program did help me a lot in terms of my listening and speaking. Now I am not nervous to do a public presentation, and I have some chances to talk to professors and classmates. That's much better than before. And that's why I am thinking of pursuit a doctoral degree if possible. (p. 81)

Roger also commented that formal school education was a good approach for him to become familiar with society and help him settle down more easily:

> Going to school is just another way. I don't think that in a short time, you can improve your English skills dramatically, that's not practical, but you can understand some social interaction, some regulations, something else you need to understand to survive here. If you don't know the basic rules and laws in Canada, how you gonna survive and live here? For me, school education is the best way. (p. 34)

The six participants shared their experiences and perceptions of culture learning within a predominant English language society. They further explored their integrated experience of combining language learning and culture learning with their long-term life goals.

Language, culture, and long-term goals

The six participants spoke favorably about the importance of English language and culture learning in their lives. They revealed that the learning was important when they first came to Canada and would be of the same importance in the future. They identified three positive influences of English language and culture learning in their lives: the positive influence of culture learning on ESL learning; the integration of Chinese and English culture; and long-term goals.

The positive influence of culture learning on ESL learning. All six participants attributed their improvement in English to their accumulated culture learning. In general, culture learning facilitated the participants' English language learning, and helped them build self-confidence. Jenny said that, although she still felt nervous about speaking English publicly, she had made

great progress through culture learning:

> Oh, yes, I feel much more confident now, much easier actually although I am always nervous when I speak in the class. Compared to two years ago, I feel that I have more confident in myself not only because I can speak better English, but because I know more about the people here, the society, and the educational system. I think the culture learning is very important, and language is always bound with it own culture, right? (p. 13)

Jenny suggested that school education for ESL learners should focus more on cultural issues:

> Provide much more culture information related to the language of the students, and encourage them to speak as much as possible, and think independent, and teach the students to be more confident in talking in English. (p. 13)

Mary had not considered the concept of culture learning previously, but she admitted that it

happened all the time, whether she was aware of the culture learning or not, and it helped her

considerably:

> Well, I never thought about that, I don't know if it's culture learning, but I feel that the more I understand their culture, I can understand their, I mean westerners' life the better. I do feel that culture really helps me learn English. Now at least I know some Canadian culture, like hockey, baseball. For me, these are all new stuff, and I am learning. Actually, I never thought about culture learning, but it does exist in everyday life, I guess, perhaps it's necessary to add something about their culture into our English study. (p. 26)

For Roger, learning English was motivated by eagerness to become involved in Canadian

society. He felt that it was important to get used to the lifestyle and social customs here. He

compared the relationship between language and culture to that of a key to a door:

> Actually it's kind of getting familiar with North American styles. I don't think that English is the real obstacle. To study here, I first get used to all the stuff, and know how to use them, and get to deal with all kinds of situations. So English is not a big problem, and shouldn't be the ultimate goal. For me, I think, you have to understand the social system first. To learn English is like the key only when we obtain the key can we open the door to the society. (p. 37)

John recalled that, when he first worked in a company, he felt himself very isolated because

he did not understand the local culture and couldn't hold a casual conversation with his

co-workers. When he was learning English through TV, radio, and internet, he focused more on

the cultural aspects instead of the vocabulary or grammar:

> You know, I just talked, first in the company, I can't talk with other people, For local people, they can talk a lot of things, and what I can do is just stand there and listen. You will

not, even you want to say something, but sometimes it's very hard for you. You are not very familiar with their topics, for example, they mention some sports, and they mention some, you know, some politics, and some history, what company in Toronto or something. You have no idea about all that kind of things. (p. 57)

So now, when I watch news on TV or radio, I try to remember what happened everyday in Toronto, if Maple Leafs won the hockey game or if the traffic was heavy in the highway, so that I can have something to say with my coworkers. I think before, you know, I focus too much on vocabulary, sentence structure, tenses, you know, grammar. Sometimes, when you are learning a language, you make mistakes, it's ok, if you can express yourself and people can understand you, so that's enough. I think I need to change my learning habits. (p. 57)

Nathan commented that any language was based on its own culture; therefore, language

and culture could not be separated. His own experience was that culture learning could help him

understand the language better:

I think English culture, of course, improve my language because it makes me understand better. And sometimes under beneath the language, you have to know what the real meaning is. For my life here especially in terms of my working, and communicating with others, another one, the culture learning, I think, en.. is very helpful. Any language is based on its own culture, same thing, so many foreigners go to China to learn Chinese, they have to see the culture first, understand what is happening here, then they can learn the language. (p. 89)

Culture learning motivated the participants to learn more about the English language and

understand more about the society. Rachel attributed her easy adaptation to the English culture

in Canada to her good foundation in English and her willingness to interact with the society:

Uh, it is very hard, yes, especially for the first few steps, you have to walk, it was very hard, for example, for the first week, I sent out hundreds of resume, but didn't get any response. But I know it is hard for a start. In a sense, I think I am well prepared, compared to other new immigrants, my English was much better, I can say that, so for me, there wasn't too many culture shocks since I ' learned a lot before. The only problem for me at that time was that I didn't now how this system worked. Say, for a job interview, I didn't know HR would contact you first through a telephone interview, and then I need to talk to the hiring committee... eh, it is a whole procedure, and you have to know that before you can get any chance. For me, another thing is that I am very outgoing. I enjoy talking to new people, working various jobs. So I guess psychologically I was prepared, socially I was prepared. That's why I can get a job I like to do. (p. 104)

The integration of Chinese and English culture. The processes of language and culture

learning permeated every aspect of the participants' lives. The participants found that both

Chinese tradition and the English language culture intersected in their lives.

The six participants expressed the idea that, when they immersed themselves in this predominantly English culture in Canada, they required some time to adapt to it, and at the same time to maintain their own first culture. When responding to the question of how they combined the two cultures in their lives in the context of a predominantly English-speaking culture, they mentioned some cultural conflicts. Overall, they benefited from the integration.

Jenny recalled that, when she first enrolled at the university, she could not adjust to the environment. However, she survived the challenges through learning from the Canadian students:

> Because I am a slow reader and I have to finish lots of reading and assignments, actually in my own language, I was not very talkative, not talkative at all, so in English I am silent I think. Therefore, the beginning of the course was a disaster for me, and I felt so shameful of myself, I always think that the classmate will look down upon me, you know, in China, if you are not doing good at school, everyone will think that there is no future for you, and it's not an honorable thing. So one day, I was chatting with one of my classmates and told her my concern. She is Canadian. You know what she told me, "Are you crazy, nobody will look down upon you just because you are not active in the class. Come on, why you Chinese are always so worried about scores, marks? And why you guys care so much about others". From that moment, you know what, I feel myself released, and they are right, be yourself, don't pay too much attention to other's opinion toward you. You will never be happy that way. (p. 6)

In some respects, Jenny said she could not agree with Canadians' perspectives, but she noted that she could understand and respect their culture:

> I am trying to change, but I don't think everything is ideally perfect. For example, one day I was taking the subway and there was this old lady getting on the train, it was rush hour, very packed, and nobody stood up and gave her the seat. I didn't have a seat myself, otherwise, I would ask her sit down right away. You know, in our culture, how we respect and care about the elders, but here I guess people care more about themselves. Of course, they are more independent and I know lots of the kids try to support themselves at a very young age. It's hard to judge which culture is better, which one is worse. I pick up the better thing, the thing I think fit for me no matter which country it is. (p. 8)

Mary said that her family tried to mention Chinese traditions, and that this was the way that she and her family tended to remember families and friends at home:

> But sometimes, on the Chinese holidays, we just cook big dinners, and make calls back to China to greet our family and friends there, that's very important, we don't really celebrate here, but we need to remember those days in order to greet our family and friends back in China. (p. 28)

She also said that there were lots of things in Canada that she and her family tried to learn and

gradually enjoyed:

> Well, how to say, I think yes and no, yes is because since we are here, we have to change
> our life according to their habits or customs, but at first, I don't really feel Christmas is that
> important or Thanksgiving, we have to eat turkey. But on those holidays, we see people
> exchange gifts, the day care center will have some party, and that's very nice. You know a
> good way to share happiness with other people. So now I start to like those holidays.
> Another thing is the potluck, before in China, we never have that. If you want to invite your
> friends home for dinner, you know, you have to prepare everything yourself, and of course,
> it's too much work to do. I went to LINC classes, and everyone bring some food or dishes
> to the class, it's much easier and we had so many different things. Now my friends and I
> always have potluck, ha, it's really a great idea especially for housewives. (p. 29)

John found that culture differences were reflected in the workplace:

> Well, in China. Sometimes, speaking way, I think that's the speaking way. In China, you
> know, always say something not directly, they just go, pass by something, right? But here,
> sometimes they are very direct or even rude. You know, when I, I still remember, when I
> just go, went to the company, and sometimes, I talked to my boss, you know, he always
> says: "you are too polite". But I told him that that is Chinese culture, because he thinks, you
> know, the people speak to their boss directly and they say what they think, they just say it
> directly. (p. 68)

Roger considered immigration as a big transition in his life. He commented that "This

society [Canada] is caring for poor people; if we are poor, we don't need to worry about our

basic living" (Roger, p. 45), and he was happy to choose Canada as a new home:

> The thing is quite obvious that China is developing at lower stage than Canada, so there is
> much difference in terms of social institutions, living standard, your personal choice, all
> kinds of things. It's absolutely much better here, so I think it's a good choice. For ordinary
> people going to Canada, if there is no language obstacle, the greatest obstacle, then the life
> would be much easier. Of course, anything takes time, so be positive and try to adjust
> yourself to the new land. (p. 45)

Roger also reflected on why Chinese people always lived within the limited Chinese circle and

he viewed doing so as a passive way for them in the future:

> They just turn Canada into China, so I don't think it's a positive living way. I think most
> Chinese are afraid of changes simply because they didn't know about the other culture and
> they don't know how to make adjustments. I suggest that they study English first, try to
> understand the culture differences, try to contact more local people, try to interact with
> more local people here would make a great difference. (p. 46)

John felt that the Chinese lifestyle was more comfortable and suitable for him, but he also

admitted that he had changed considerably in order to adjust to the life here:

> Compared with Chinese lifestyle, I think Chinese lifestyle is much better. Because you are very familiar with that kind of life, right? So in China, you will feel very relaxed, comfortable, and you can go wherever you want to go, and you can buy whatever you want to buy, right? But here, sometime you have to, you know, because of the limitation of our English, you cannot know everything. But you have, for most people, we still, how to say that, we still have connection with Chinese people. (p. 61)

> Like the old saying, "While in Rome, do as the Romans". You know in China, we never tip anybody in the restaurant, but here, it's a courtesy to do that, so I will follow them. Also, my son is 14 now, and he found an after school job in the library, which is very good. In China, parent will never let their children work when they are still young. Here is different, that's why kids are more independent. Both my wife and I think that's the good side of Canadian culture. (p. 61)

Rachel valued life in Canada, and appreciated the immigration policy Canada provided for

Chinese people:

> I really like Canada, its culture, its democracy. Because, because Canada is one of the biggest immigrant countries, right? And it opened its door to Chinese, not only, Canada can provide such a good environment for people all around the world, I really appreciate it. (p. 111)

And Rachel learned a great deal from Canadian culture:

> Let me think, I will, learn to be satisfied with what I have and enjoy the life, get relaxed. Like in China, I always feel great pressure from the colleagues, from my relatives or family, I got great pressure from my sister. But here everyone is living a simple life, and they are happy with whatever they got. Like my friends, they don't earn a lot more than I do, but they will also spend weekend camping, B.B.Q., or having a small party. They are happy all the time. I think that's very important in one's life. Why we Chinese always push ourselves so much and still aren't happy. Now, I am more like Canadian in a way, and I really want my son growing up in the combination of the two cultures and get the best out of it. (p. 114)

She found that there was always a cultural difference in her life and she learned to resolve the

conflicts:

> Yes, there are big culture differences all the time, like here, in China, there is real friendship between colleagues, but here no. I am an outgoing person and I think it is important to build up friendship with coworkers, but here, I don't know why, after work, everyone only mind their own business, and I don't like that, but I respect their culture, I guess because Canadians care more about their privacy and they only share time with their intimate friends or families. (p. 118)

The life experiences of the participants indicated that language and culture learning were

indispensable in their lives. Through the language learning and culture adaptation in the

predominant English speaking society, they gradually developed their life goals and

expectations.

Long-term goals. When asked how they envisioned their lives in ten years, the participants

provided quite tangible blueprints in terms of their career goals and family life. They also

indicated that there was still a long way for them to go, and that it would be a challenge to

achieve the goals.

Jenny, who planned to find an office job in an educational setting, was quite optimistic

about her future:

> Something related to arts and paper work, I think, and I know I am good at paper work, so
> hopefully, I could work in an educational institute or school environment. I am also trying
> to learn some office skills, like basic data processing programs, some management skills.
> Hopefully, I can get a job in that area. In 10 years, it looks like too long for me, but I am
> quite confident about the future. (p. 8)

Meanwhile, Jenny realized that it would be a long journey for her to finally settle down, and she

felt that learning English would be a lifelong project for her, no matter whether she chose to stay

in Canada or return to China:

> Um, doing something that each woman has to do, giving birth to baby, find a job, things
> like that, make money, take trips especially to Europe? In China I had a chance but I didn't
> go, and perhaps to another college to learn something I really like. I know it would be hard
> for me to find a good job, a job that I really want to do here, since I don't have Canadian
> experience and I can not speak perfect English, but I am trying, and I think to learn English
> is a lifelong thing. If I am planning to stay in Canada, I have no choice. Even if I want to go
> back to China, I think English will still help my career in many ways, so I will still keep
> learning it. But right now, I feel there are too many things ahead, and I feel a lot of the
> pressure. (p. 9)

For Mary, it was too early to decide what her life goals would be in ten years, but she

expressed the hope that she would have a more stable and better life not only for her and her

partner, but also for her son:

> Well… this is really a hard question, I don't know how to answer you, you know, I have
> never thought about 10 years from now, everyday, I mean now, life is just the same for me,
> what I am worrying now is just how long we could keep our jobs, if we get laid off, I have
> no idea what we are going to do, so I have no idea about 10 years later, I think, I wish life
> will be more stable then… So really don't know, maybe like lots of Chinese, we will go
> back to China, but it's just impossible since we've already chosen the life here, and our

child was born here, we want him to have a better future, I guess that's most immigrants, I mean most of first-generation immigrants sacrificed themselves just for their children's future here, who knows, probably we will save some money and run a small business. (p. 27)

In addition, Mary suggested there should be more settlement programs for new immigrants in Toronto. She admitted that she would have had much better job opportunities if she knew English better:

Yes, and when lots of people say, if Canada is no good, we can return to China, but in reality, it's just impossible, we've given up everything there, how come we could get back? But I do think that the government should set up more programs for new immigrants to settle down. You know, in Toronto, one-third population are immigrants. If there are more resources and the government can put more long-term help for us, I think we should have a better life now. Also, I really wish my English is better, you see, why so many Indians can get a job that easily in Canadian companies, just because their language is much better than Chinese. So I have to learn English everyday. (p. 28)

Roger did not have a detailed plan for his future career, but he intended to find a job in the financial field, and was willing to deal with all kinds of investments (Roger, p. 43). He also emphasized the importance of learning English in his future career:

For me, to work in the financial industry, it is not enough just have the knowledge, but to applied the knowledge to the real world. You know, that's very important, and you have to acquire higher level of English to achieve that level. Lots of issues are totally beyond the language itself, I have to learn the way westerners do in that industry. I guess I have to take English as my life-long weapon. (p. 44)

John was optimistic about his future. He thought that he would be more confident about his life in another five years because by then he would be speaking English well. Thus, there would be more career opportunities and less pressure for him and his family. Most important of all for him, though, was happiness:

Maybe after 5 years, I will feel confident, that's no problem, because I learn a lot of things, I can speak perfect English by that time. 10 years later, well, I have no idea, but what I want to do is step by step, you know, I just spend everyday, today you feel very happy, that means that you've got one more day in your whole life, that's what I think, what attitude I have changed since I came to Canada, to be happy everyday is the best thing in life, no matter what I am doing later, a programmer, technician or manager, I will always take happiness first, and always be positive about your future. (p. 69)

Nathan was planning to work in the educational technology industry as a programmer, but

he realized that it was a very challenging job which would require a high level of English

language proficiency:

> Well, I don't know other area, but in educational software, the language is very important, because you have to help the others to develop the on-line course, that means that not only develop the software, but needs to do some interpersonal support, this kind of things. If I want to get a job in the educational technology field, I have to gain some work experience first, and learn more about the technical English, which is highly demanding. For me, only when I can do the programming better than the Canadians can I get a job because I will never speak as fluently as the native speakers. (p. 97)

Rachel was very ambitious about her future. She was enjoying the freedom and democracy

in Canada and was confident about everything:

> Well, I am a Chinese, I will always be Chinese, it doesn't matter whether I get Canadian citizenship or not, Since I immigrated here, I feel good about Toronto, the life is ok, I will stick to it. I will never worry about my future? No. For here, for here, you will have a chance, you can have a chance to run for city counselor, for MP, MPP, you can, and for last, we saw more and more immigrants from mainland China running for the elections, like the provincial elections. So this society is more open and…Freedom and more democracy, more tangible democracy, more practical democracy you can benefit from. Yes, and I also have a very personal perspective, when I get the citizenship, I can have a job from the federal government, for certain jobs, only citizens can get it. (p. 117)

Rachel also provided some constructive suggestions for all the new immigrants:

> Get yourself financially, psychologically, and everything prepared, and don't expect this is heaven, and this is hell either, but this is not heaven either. If you are lucky, you can get a job in two months, but the big possibility is that people don't find a job, their professional job or good job in the first year, that's quite natural, that's quite nature. So don't get upset with that, be positive and confident. Get yourself well prepared, try to learn English well, and learn the culture here, sooner or later, you will be successful no matter where you are. (p. 118)

The participants have various perceptions of their language, culture and long-term goals in

Canada based on their different living and learning experiences. However, the research

findings suggest that there are inseparable connections among English language and culture

learning.

The above section of this chapter presented the research findings. The following section

discusses the interpretation of the findings.

Interpretation of Findings

Three major themes emerged from the analysis of the various data sources: perceptions of English language learning; perceptions of culture learning; and language, culture, and long-term goals. The following section discusses the interpretation.

Perceptions of English language learning

Motivation and attitudes. Before immigrating to Canada, all six participants had studied English as a foreign language and were confident of their English language proficiency. Their arrival in Canada and their initial attempts to communicate in a predominantly English -speaking society caused them to realize that their English proficiency was insufficient to help them settle in Canada. The participants had a variety of reasons for wanting to improve their English proficiency. Participants demonstrated both instrumental and integrative motivations (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

A primary reason for learning English was the need to find work. For example, John mentioned that he had to improve English rapidly so that he could establish the basics before his family joined him in Canada. Nathan attributed his lack of professional job offers to his low level of English proficiency. Mary's and Roger's motivations were to meet more basic needs such as applying for a health card, driver's licence, and social insurance number. John found that English was "the most important key here, and only when you acquired good English, will you have good life here" (p. 60). He also emphasized that English was indispensable in his work. These types of motivation to learn English reflect instrumental motivation because the learners are motivated to learn L2 for utilitarian purposes, such as furthering a career, improving social status, or meeting educational requirements (Gardner & Lambert, 1972).

The participants had other motivations to improve their English proficiency while immersing themselves into a predominant English-speaking society. For Jenny, increased English language proficiency meant that she would be more communicative in her academic

studies. Roger remembered that, when he first arrived in Canada, he found his English was not good enough and that sometimes he had difficulty expressing himself or understanding what others were saying. Nathan recalled that when he first arrived in Canada his English was insufficient in daily life and that he could not understand native English speakers. Gardner and Lambert (1972) describe this type of motivation as integrative because "integrative motivation implies a willingness to acquire the language and social habits characteristic of the linguistic community of the target culture, that is, a desire to be like representative members of the 'other' language community, and to become associated, at least vicariously with that other community" (p. 14).

Challenges and strategies. All participants encountered some challenges when immersing themselves in the predominant English language society. For example, Jenny and Nathan both indicated that they rarely talked to their classmates after school simply because sometimes they did not quite understand the conversation. This attitude prevented them from establishing further relationships with the native speakers. Consequently, they were psychologically and socially distanced from opportunities to learn English. Jenny also recalled that, when she first attended classes at the university, she hardly participated in the classroom discussions and did not know how to express herself in public. Nathan commented that this experience was very frustrating because he was unable to follow discussions with the professors and classmates. This finding is consistent with the study of Schumann (1978a), who reports that in the early stages of SLA when learners have little contact with the target language, there will be social and psychological distance which will influence their learning experiences. Schumann (1978a) claims that, in such learning situations, the learners receive very little L2 input and usually fail to convert the language input into intake. In other words, as Ellis (1986) notes, only those learners who engage in the regular use of their second language and receive a great quantity of input will most likely demonstrate a greater ability to use their second language.

In order to improve their English language proficiency, all participants participated in at least one of two programs designed to assist immigrants in settlement: ESL classes or LINC, a program intended to assist newcomers in negotiating daily life in Canada. The LINC program is funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada, and provides basic language instruction in English to eligible adult newcomers --- immigrants and those to whom Canada intends to grant permanent resident status --- to facilitate their social, cultural, and economic integration into society (Settlement Service Canada, 2006). Several participants observed that the course content focused on grammar, a traditional focus in English classes in China. Thus, these participants had few opportunities to develop fluency in English in the above programs. However, Mary had a different learning experience from that of other participants. Mary found that LINC and ESL programs were necessary since there were many exercises provided in the class and the teaching focused mainly on reading and writing. Such a focus was of great help to her (Interview, Mary). These different learning experiences within a structured setting are consistent with Krashen's (1981) study as to how classroom learning contributes to ESL learner's language acquisition. Krashen suggests that the classroom setting is not conducive to language or culture acquisition; rather, it contributes to the learning of rules. He also points out that while more formal instruction means more language proficiency in ESL, it does not guarantee that the learners will have the necessary knowledge of the target language society and culture to communicate well with the target language group.

A major barrier for the participants to develop English language fluency was the tendency to develop social networks within the Chinese community and to speak only Chinese with their partners, families, or friends. The six participants realized that they were basically maintaining their Chinese lifestyles and were not speaking English at home at all. Jenny and Roger tried to talk to their partners in English, "but it didn't work out" (Jenny, p. 6), "we feel so weird to speak English to each other" (Roger, p. 23). The participants did not have opportunities to speak

English because everybody was Chinese. This learning experience was similar to that in the case study which Schumann (1978a) conducted with a Latin-American working-class immigrant, Alberto. In Schumann's study, Alberto failed to improve his L2 proficiency through formal or informal instruction because he felt more comfortable within his own language culture group, and was socially and psychologically quite distant from the TL group.

Both Nathan and John wanted to maintain the Chinese language and culture in their homes because of their children. John, in particular, noted that his young daughter was rejecting her Chinese mother tongue and culture. Nathan expressed the concern that many second-generation Chinese-Canadians "don't want to speak in Chinese" (Nathan, p. 84). Selover (2003) explains that most first-generation Chinese immigrants choose to live within the Chinese community because they need to feel secure about their own culture identity within an English-speaking society. Selover (2003) also found in her research that most Chinese immigrants persist in speaking the mother tongue at home for fear that their children will lose their "culture roots" (p. 7). Many immigrants felt that some language loss had occurred, mainly among the American-born who learned Chinese as children, but who may not have spoken it regularly or did not use it as their main language at home. In this study, John and Mary mentioned that their thinking in Chinese was also an obstacle because they tended to translate from Chinese to English before speaking.

All the participants identified several effective strategies for learning English when they immersed themselves in a predominantly English-speaking culture. Three participants regarded TV and radio as primary resources to obtain English input. According to Roger, Mary, and Nathan, formal education was a good strategy to connect with native English speakers. Rachel and John recommended volunteerism as the best way to learn the English language and come to understand Canadian society. Both of them found that involvement in community activities helped them greatly in improving their English language proficiency. For Jenny and Mary,

workshops offered by local social service organizations facilitated their use of effective job-search practices and techniques in a manner appropriate to the English-speaking cultural context.

Ellis (1986) postulates that access to comprehensible input may be a necessary condition for acquisition of a second language. Moreover, he emphasizes the importance of classroom learning. In this study, all six participants took part in different language programs, such as ESL and LINC. Attending English classes seemed to be very helpful for Mary and Nathan in terms of improving their listening comprehension and enlarging their vocabularies. Roger found that English classes helped him improve his reading and writing skills. Ellis (1986) notes that theclassroom learning is an important language setting for ESL learners, who often are unable to secure adequate comprehensive input from the outside world. Other researchers (Krashen, 1982; Terrel, 1984) find that, in a formal classroom setting, when enough comprehensible input is provided and the learners have exposure to the formal grammatical rules, it is easier to develop communicative skills through systematic instruction..

Workplace learning. Working provided participants with opportunities to use English and develop greater fluency. For example, Mary and Rachel both emphasized the importance of English learning in the workplace. Similarly, John took workplace learning not only as an approach to assist his English language learning, but, more importantly, for his professional improvement. Rachel pointed out that her workplace learning would no longer be limited to improving English language proficiency, but had extended her efforts to understanding the whole social work system. The participants' learning experiences in the workplace are consistent with those reported in Bierema's (2002) research. Bierema (2002) asserts that, since most immigrants work for pay during their lifetimes, the workplace becomes a significant context for learning "language, values, cultures, and social norms that coalesce into the complex sociocultural system of work" (p. 12). Therefore, workplace learning is an important dimension

of immigrants' language and culture learning.

The participants in this study noted that the challenges in the early stages of their settlement prompted them to rethink their approaches to learning. They used a number of strategies to improve their English language, including chatting with Canadians and other native English-speakers, immersing themselves in an English-speaking environment, and viewing television and/or listening to radio broadcasts. John and Rachel took part in various community activities to find opportunities to practice their English. For example, John volunteered as a caregiver in a seniors' home, and Rachel worked as a Chinese language teacher for the community centre. This kind of immersion meant that the participants heard slang and idioms repeatedly in their daily lives.

Perceptions of culture learning

All six participants experienced various forms of culture shock, which in turn aroused feelings of frustration, loneliness, and/or fear. Jenny found that cultural differences and culture shock resulted in low self-esteem and feelings of isolation. She explained that in the Chinese school system, a student with lower performance is usually overlooked by peers; therefore, she felt ashamed about her silence in the classroom and refused to make friends with classmates. Goodenough (1971) found that immigrants who wanted to be acculturated to the target language society usually experienced culture shock initially, and that culture shock would usually cause anxiety and feelings of surprise, disorientation, and confusion, etc.

Mary also expressed her fear and loneliness when she and her family first arrived in Canada. She found that her negative feelings towards English culture had not only deterred her from further English language learning but had also discouraged her from socializing with native speakers. Schumann (1978a) refers to this account of SLA in the early stage as the "pidginization hypothesis" (p. 110). He points out that, if pidginization persists during learners' SLA, they will be unable to acquire the target language and that their learning will become

fossilized, or learners fail to reach target language competence.

Rachel was the only one who appeared to have adapted to the English-speaking culture easily: "I know it is hard for a start. In a sense, I think I am well prepared, compared to other new immigrants, my English was much better, I can say that, so for me, there wasn't too many culture shocks since I'd learned a lot before" (Rachel, p. 106). This finding suggests that the impact of culture shock may vary from one individual to another.

Each participant identified some conflicting tensions between the first culture and the predominantly English-speaking culture in Canada. Through daily activities with their community, schools, workplaces, they became more conscious of the majority culture variables, and reflected on their own culture identities. For instance, in terms of the educational system, three of the six participants noted that there were tremendous differences between Canadian and Chinese schools. Nathan found that the teaching methodology was entirely different. In China, teachers focus more on students' academic performances, while in Canadian schools teachers tend to pay more attention to students' overall abilities. Jenny commented on the different learning behaviors of Canadian students and Chinese students: "As a student, Canadians tend to be much more of themselves, for new ideas, for independent thinking, well as the Chinese student, the most important thing is to listen to the teacher or pass the examination" (p. 11). Roger raised the question of different goals in these educational systems. According to Roger, the different social systems determine the different goals in the educational system; consequently, the learning strategies would be different in these two societies. Gardner (1985) 'suggests it is quite possible that the more direct interactions learners have with the other culture, the better understanding they will form toward their own culture and the target culture, and the comparison of the both will usually result in positive learning experiences. Goodenough (1971) explains that culture shock can make learners develop a better understanding of the target culture and become more aware of the culture differences.

When asked about their culture learning experiences, the participants had different learning strategies. They all admitted that they celebrated Canadian holidays and traditions, and that doing so was a good way to learn English culture and social customs. John found that going to church was another way to learn about the local religions. Rachel benefited a lot from attending different community activities such as teaching Chinese classes, and volunteering for the local school board. According to Jenny, Nathan, and Roger, formal university education was another entry to culture learning. Kramsch (1996) points out that cultural learning can foster understanding and appreciation for the wide variety of cultures represented in the target language community, and can encourage L2 learners to recognize similarities between the cultures while maintaining and respecting their own individuality and identity.

Five of the participants understood the term "culture learning" at the time of their interviews. Mary, however, said that she had never heard of the term and did not realize the learning process existed, but she realized that culture played an important role in her daily life.

The participants also commented on how social values of their first culture and Canadian culture differed. According to the participants, Chinese people focused more on friendship and family, were more conservative, and believed in collectivism; Canadian people paid more attention to personal feelings and privacy. By comparing the culture differences between Chinese culture and English-speaking culture, the participants could choose to adapt to the new culture while maintaining their own culture identities. This learning experience is consistent with Schumann's (1978a) definition of 'acculturation,' which focuses upon learning to function in the new culture while maintaining one's own identity.

Schumann (1978a) suggests that, in the process of acculturation, learners should be not only socially integrated and psychologically open, but should also consciously or unconsciously wish to adopt the lifestyle and values of the target-language group. Through continuous culture learning and culture exchange, the participants experienced the process of social adaptation and

acculturation. In terms of the forms of acculturation, all six participants emphasized the importance of Canadian holidays and traditions. However, some of them celebrated the holidays purposely as a way of learning the culture; others felt that they had no choice but to participate in these new traditions. These different forms of acculturation can be categorized into Schumann's (1978a) taxonomy of factors that influence second language acquisition: social, affective, personality, cognitive, biological, aptitude, personal, input, and instructional factors. Schumann asserts that "although the particular categories may appear to be relevant to second language acquisition, only two types of factors, social and affective, are the major causal ones in second language acquisition and these two are subsumed by the larger construct of acculturation" (p. 135). In this study, the participants' various ways of adjusting to the English-speaking culture are consistent with the findings in Schumann's study (1978a).

The participants' different experiences of culture learning are consistent with Selover's (2003) research on Chinese immigrants' experience of immigration, acculturation, and quality of life. She proposes that immigrant learners may differ in their learning experiences as a result of their degree of understanding of the host culture. Moreover, based on the understanding of their own cultural norms, immigrant learners need to learn how the two cultures affect their learning to make the best of their culture learning (Selover 2003). This study suggests that the participants realize what the impacts of culture differences are, and how the two cultures affect their lives in Canada.

Language, culture, and long-term goals

The six participants all spoke favorably about the importance of English language and culture learning in terms of adjusting to Canada, and they all realized that the learning process was a long-term one.

All six participants attributed their improvement in English to their accumulated culture learning experiences. Jenny said that, although she still felt nervous about speaking in public,

she did make great progress through culture learning. Nathan commented that any language was based on its own culture; therefore, language and culture couldn't be separated. Ellis (1986) notes that access to the target language culture may be a necessary condition for acquisition of a second language.

While most research (Schumann, 1978a; Ellis, 1986; Paige et al. 1999; Selover, 2003) has found that L2 learners normally improve their English language proficiency rapidly after immersion in the target language culture, Selover (2003) found that culture transition in the new country was a difficult process, took place over time, and that individual differences occurred during the process of acculturation. For example, Mary expressed the concern that she hadn't made too much progress in improving her English proficiency and that she would never be acculturated to the mainstream society.

In responding to the interview questions concerning the influence of immersion in a predominantly English-speaking culture on their English learning, four participants indicated that they had more opportunities to listen, read, speak, and write English when they immersed themselves in the predominantly English-speaking culture in Canada. John said that he had access to abundant learning resources in the workplace, community centre, churches, and at home. Culture learning motivated the participants to learn more about the English language and understand more about the society. Rachel attributed her easy adaptation to the English-speaking culture in Canada to her good foundation in the English language and her willingness to interact with the society. Roger viewed the learning process as a ladder for him to get into the mainstream society. Overall, the participants acknowledged that immersion in a predominantly English-speaking culture enabled them to receive a large amount of valuable English language input. The participants' perception of the relationship between language and culture is consistent with Gardner's (1985) findings that, when learners have more interactions with the other culture, "the amount of contact will often result in positive learning experience"

(p. 88).

However, Jenny still found life very disappointing and far from satisfactory since she had not made many friends here and seldom had chances to socialize with Canadians. Jenny explained that the problem was in part the result of her own personality and that she had always been an isolated person. Nathan expressed the feeling that he would never get a professional job because he could never speak English as well as native speakers. He also felt that his life circle was too limited. These comments suggest that experiences of L2 learners' immersion in a predominantly English-speaking culture are complex in nature, varied, and may influence their English-speaking culture learning and English language learning in a variety of ways.

The six participants found their lifestyles increasingly became an integration of Chinese tradition and Canadian culture. Mary said that her family tried to maintain Chinese traditions and found that doing so was a way to remember families and friends at home. But she admitted that there were many traditions in Canada that she and her family tried to learn and gradually enjoyed. For instance, she liked the idea of potluck and started to invite her friends to have potlucks at her home. Rachel valued life in Canada very much and she appreciated the immigration policy Canada provided for Chinese people. Such findings confirmed the conclusion of Schumann's (1978b) research on the later stages of L2 development. Schumann proposes that the primary determinant of acculturation level depends on learners' attitudes toward engaging with the people and adopting the culture of the host country.

Li's (2003) study also revealed that there are two different types of situations when SLA learners immerse themselves in a predominantly English culture. In one type of situation, English-speaking cultural elements are in harmony with those of their own culture. In the second, English language cultural elements conflict with those of their own culture. In cases where there is no conflict, the participants will integrate English cultural elements into their existing cultural knowledge. For example, if Jenny thought that English-speaking cultural concepts, such as

independent study habits, were good for her, she would integrate them into her own Chinese cultural frame of reference. In cases where there are conflicts between components of their own cultural views and elements of English-language culture, the participants tended to deal with the conflicting elements in a variety of ways. For instance, when Roger found that his limited Chinese lifestyle and social circle hindered him from connecting with mainstream society, he tried to enlarge his social circle by inviting classmates home and attending some parties at the university. John found that sometimes his co-workers were very straightforward or even rude whenever there was misconduct at work, while he preferred to express his own ideas more politely.

When asked what their lives would be ten years later, all the six participants indicated that only with advanced English language proficiency and better understanding of the culture could they achieve their goals. Based on Pierce's research (1995), this notion of combining second language learning with career goals is defined as "investment in SLA" (p. 9). Pierce contends that it is natural for learners to anticipate a return on the investment in a second language that will give them access to previously unattainable resources.

Roger expressed his eagerness to work in the financial field, and emphasized the importance of learning English for his future career. Rachel was planning to advance her career in the political arena because she was confident about everything: her English language proficiency, her understanding of Canadian culture, and her extensive work experience. Pierce (2000) contends that SLA learners usually expect two kinds of paybacks: symbolic resources such as obtaining language, education, friendship and social recognition; and material resources, including capital goods, real estate, and money. In addition, when learners invest themselves in SLA, they are not only exchanging information with target language groups, but also they are requiring a social recognition from the target culture. In a sense, the investment in SLA can stimulate learners' incentive in L2 learning.

All the participants identified the positive influences of English language and culture learning in their lives. These experiences demonstrate a positive relationship between English language and culture learning. They had learned to integrate their first culture with English-speaking culture during the process of acculturation, and they admitted that a better understanding of the English language and English-speaking culture could help them achieve their life goals and expectations in the future.

This chapter presented profiles of the participants in the study, the findings of the study, and a discussion of these findings in relation to the literature. The final chapter presents the conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of the study was to investigate six recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language learning and culture learning in a predominantly English-speaking culture during their first three years of settlement in Canada. Three themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data: (1) perceptions of their English language learning; (2) perceptions of culture learning; and (3) language, culture, and long-term goals. The following section discusses the conclusions and recommendations.

Conclusion

Before emigrating to Canada, all six immigrants were confident of their English language proficiency. Settlement in a predominately English-speaking milieu challenged this perception. All encountered some language barriers and challenges when they first settled in an English-speaking culture. For the participants in this study, language challenges arose in a variety of sociocultural contexts: conversations with Canadians, classroom discussion, social interactions, and workplace communication. All the six participants came to realize that their proficiency in English was insufficient to help them settle down in Canada, and the anxiety of adjusting to the new environment motivated them to improve their English proficiency.

The findings support the existing literature and generate new insights into Chinese immigrants' experiences with English language and culture learning. The six participants demonstrated both instrumental and integrative motivations for learning English (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). As well, they encountered challenges when they immersed themselves in the English-speaking community, and were reluctant to engage in dialogue or to speak publicly with members of the target community. Schumann (1978a) contends that the social and psychological distance disadvantages ESL learners who then receive little L2 input.

All respondents participated in at least one or two programs designed to assist newcomers

in negotiating daily life in Canada. Five of the participants questioned the value of these programs in enabling them to improve their oral language proficiency. This raises the question of what objectives, contents and teaching methods would be of most value to immigrants so that they may learn the target language and culture. This echoes Krashen's (1981) finding that while more formal instruction may improve proficiency in ESL it does not necessarily mean that students will be able to communicate comfortably with the target group.

The participants tended to mix socially with other members of the Chinese community and some avoided settings where they would have to communicate in English. Situating themselves in a comfortable social network meant that several participants' language proficiency did not advance rapidly; a finding similar to Schumann's (1978 a). Selover (2003) also noted that first-generation Chinese immigrants tended to socialize in the Chinese community because they felt more secure about their Chinese language and culture identity in a predominantly English society.

The study illuminates the personal journeys of six immigrants whose experiences are unique; yet they share some common features. The findings illustrated that immersion in a predominantly English society is complex in nature and may be experienced in different ways. Of significance in this study was the range of diverse ways in which the respondents developed particular strategies to obtain comprehensible "input" (Ellis, 1986) to improve their English proficiency. Bierema (2002) found academic programs and/or workplace learning contributed to their proficiency in English. It is insightful that immersion in English in church groups and volunteerism were effective in providing language input and output.

All participants experienced various degrees of culture shock, which resulted in anxiety and feelings of surprise, disconnection and confusion. Perceived culture differences included different philosophies of schooling and what is valued in the curriculum, teaching methods and expectations for student performance, politics, democracy versus a socialist society, and values

exposed by Canadians and Chinese immigrants. One participant, Mary retreated into her own community, a phenomenon Schumann (1978a) described as the "pidginization hypothesis" (p. 110). The others all appeared to recognize the value of contact with the target language community. The study confirms Gardner's (1985) hypothesis that the more direct interactions ESL learners have with the target community, the better understanding they will have about their own and the target communities' culture identities.

Schumann (1978a) defines acculturation as learning how to function in the new culture while maintaining one's own identity. In this study, the participants already emphasized the importance of observing Canadian holidays and traditions as a key part of Canadian culture, although, as noted above, they were also aware of other culture differences. Selover (2003) contends that immigrants need to learn how the two cultures affect their learning.

The participants perceived that culture learning contributed to their language learning (Ellis, 1986), but articulated the tensions between maintaining their own language and culture identities and those of the target language. Selover (2003) recommends that adult educators, especially language teachers, should begin to address culture difference, among students' cultures. This is an important implication for this study as well, and is discussed below.

Implications

The findings of this study were based on a small sample, six Chinese immigrants, who settled in a metropolitan center which is a predominant English language society. The findings of the study may reflect similar learning experiences of immigrants from other cities, such as Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary where there are large populations of Chinese and the Chinese language is spoken in the community. Therefore, the findings are not generalizable, but may be transferable to similar settings and contexts. The findings may also be useful for social workers, immigrants' settlement workers, ESL educators, vocational trainers, and others who work with Chinese immigrants.

The findings suggest that LINC or ESL programs should incorporate information for immigrants on the nature of the immersion experience and the relationship between English language and culture learning. Language programs provided by various social service agencies and schools should provide opportunities for students to develop metacognitive awareness of their own and other cultures in ways which value differences and diversity.

The participants' learning experiences in ESL/LINC programs reveal that instructors should incorporate the teaching of ESL and multiculturalism in their classes. Instructors should begin to explore dynamic interactive methods of promoting language proficiency in speaking, reading and writing.

According to the participants, settlement programs provided by government units and social service agencies need to prepare brochures and other resources which address culture learning and strategies immigrants might use to promote their English and culture learning. The settlement or workplace learning programs should address issues that might affect new immigrants' lives, and should provide problem-solving strategies to help them adapt to the new environment more easily. New immigrants need opportunities to discuss with each other issues such as maintaining their culture and language identities and how to deal with their first language and culture loss.

A lack of funding is a common problem for most language schools and social service agencies across the country. In a metropolitan centre such as Toronto, there should be more government-funded language programs for ESL learners to immerse themselves into the English-speaking culture. At the same time, current settlement programs, such as LINC schools and professional workshops, should focus more on the learners' career goals in relation to their English language learning. The participants' experiences also suggested that volunteerism was an effective strategy for newcomers to get involved in the social system. This finding suggests that settlement programs and social workers should advocate volunteerism in the new

immigrants' groups so that they could be more involved in the social system and obtain more opportunities to learn English language and culture.

The participants' concerns about language loss suggest implications for Chinese (and other) immigrants' children and schooling. Curricula in elementary and secondary schools should incorporate multicultural approaches that value diversity and foster respect for different heritages and traditions. The curriculum of VESL for immigrant learners should be more practical and constructive with an aim of helping the immigrants settle down more easily.

Recommendations for Further Research

Following are questions for further research to expand upon the findings of this study:

1. How do immigrants' personal characteristics and individual cultural backgrounds influence their ESL learning in a predominant English-speaking culture society?

2. What is the nature of the curriculum in ESL/LINC programs? How do the programs promote English-speaking and culture learning?

3. How does the experience of cross-cultural awareness affect SLA for L2 learners?

4. How can ESL learners negotiate conflicting elements of their first culture and the English culture in the process of acculturation?

5. What are the tensions between maintaining first language and culture and adapting to a new society for newcomers and the second generation?

Investigating such research questions will contribute to the existing knowledge and study of ESL teaching and learning, and will illuminate the bilateral relationship between English language and English-speaking culture. Further research on ESL/LINC programs, such as more in-depth study on the program information, class information, teacher information, and learner information, will promote more effective language training for immigrant learners. Further research should provide more constructive strategies and suggestions for immigrant learners, which will enable them to settle more successfully in an English culture society.

Personal Reflections on the Research Process

The impetus to do a study on the Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language and culture learning came from a personal concern regarding the increasing amount of Chinese immigrants arriving in Canada each year. Like other immigrants who had been admitted to Canada under the Skilled Worker Class, my husband and I went through various difficulties when we first started our lives here. The English language barriers and settlement obstacles hindered us from finding stable jobs to support our daily lives. The same challenges happen every day to many of the immigrants here in Canada. It was frustrating to see that so many Chinese immigrants who settled here were facing so many problems as a reflection of their poor English language proficiency.

The research study started in September, 2003. Six Chinese immigrants expressed their willingness to participate into the study and agreed to be interviewed in March 2004. After all the research data were collected by the end of 2004, however, I had to take a leave of absence from the study for more than two years because my family life was in jeopardy as a result of difficulties arising from immigration life. During those two years, my husband and I started a small business in the hope of becoming financially stable. The business did not run as well as we had expected, but both my husband and I learned English rapidly through daily communications and interactions with customers. In 2005, my husband got a professional job with a local TV station in Toronto, and our lives gradually stabilized. In September 2006, I resumed the research with more personal experience and insights. This research was meaningful for me in that it not only provided me an opportunity to take a look at other immigrants' English language and culture learning experiences, but it also helped me to understand immigration from a personal perspective.

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Appendix A   Interview Guide

1. Where did you live in China? What motivated you to come to Canada?

2. What was your experience of learning English before coming to Canada? (length of time, opportunities to use, English proficiency)

3. When you arrived in Canada, how did you feel about your proficiency in English?

4. What strategies did you take to improve your English?

5. What opportunities have you had to speak English with Canadians whose first language is English? (school, work, community, other)

6. Tell me about your life in Canada.

    a. How is it the same as or different from life in China? (i.e. school, work, lifestyle, community)

    b. How do you feel about these changes?

    c. With whom do you associate socially?

7. In what ways have English language learning or culture learning helped you to learn English?

8. Imagine yourself 10 years from now:

    a. What will you be doing (employment)?

    b. What Chinese culture and traditions will you celebrate with family and friends?

    c. What Canadian customs and traditions will you celebrate with family and friends?

    d. What will be your citizenship status?

9. If you were to be asked by a relative or friend in China how to prepare for life in Canada, what advice would you give?

Appendix C   CONSENT FORM

I, _____, have received an explanation about the nature of the study,

its purpose and procedures. I have read and understood the covering letter of the study

entitled **"Recent Chinese immigrants' perceptions of English language and culture**

learning in Canada" by Kang Yu. I understand the following ethical considerations:

● As a volunteer, I have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

● There are no risks involved in the study.

● I am assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity.

● A copy of findings will be available in the library at the Faculty of Education, Lakehead

   University.

● Information obtaining during interviews will be securely stored at Lakehead University

   for a period of seven years ant then will be destroyed.

● The findings will be published in education journals and presented at educational

   conferences.

I agree to participate

_____

Signature   Date

I would like to receive a summary of the findings.   Yes   No

My mailing address is:

_____

_____