Language Learning Experience of Adult East Asian Learners at

English and Culture Acquisition Program:

A Case Study

by

Ximin Mi

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

Approved May 2011 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Arnold Danzig, Chair
Carlos Ovando
Elsie Szecsy

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

August 2011

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on second language acquisition process amongst East Asian adult learners at an English and Culture Acquisition Program (ECAP) classroom. To understand their English learning experience, this study employs classroom observation, participant interview and document collection as research methods. The findings of this work suggest that ECAP does intend to help learners acquire English language proficiency in ways that were responsive to both the sociocultural backgrounds and individual needs of participants. ECAP also respects and promotes the learners' autonomy in the learning process. However, the program administrators and teachers still need to deepen their understanding of East Asian learners' sociocultural heritage and individual needs and improve facilitation accordingly.

DEDICATION

To all the people that helped me here.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis would never have been written if not for the help of the following:

The American English and Culture Program: your sincerity, support and continuous effort in improving this program inspire me as a second language acquisition researcher.

My committee members: your patience, care and advising guide me all the way here.

My diligent peer reviewers: your tremendous efforts make my thesis what it is right now.

My parents: give me life, courage and unconditional support to be myself.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. has long been considered an ideal option of further education amongst East Asian students. The development of the Asian economy in past decades has corresponded with an increasing number of East Asian students flocking to the U.S to pursue better education (McClure, 2009). This figure illustrates international students coming from Asia from 1999-2008.

Figure 1: International students from Asia.
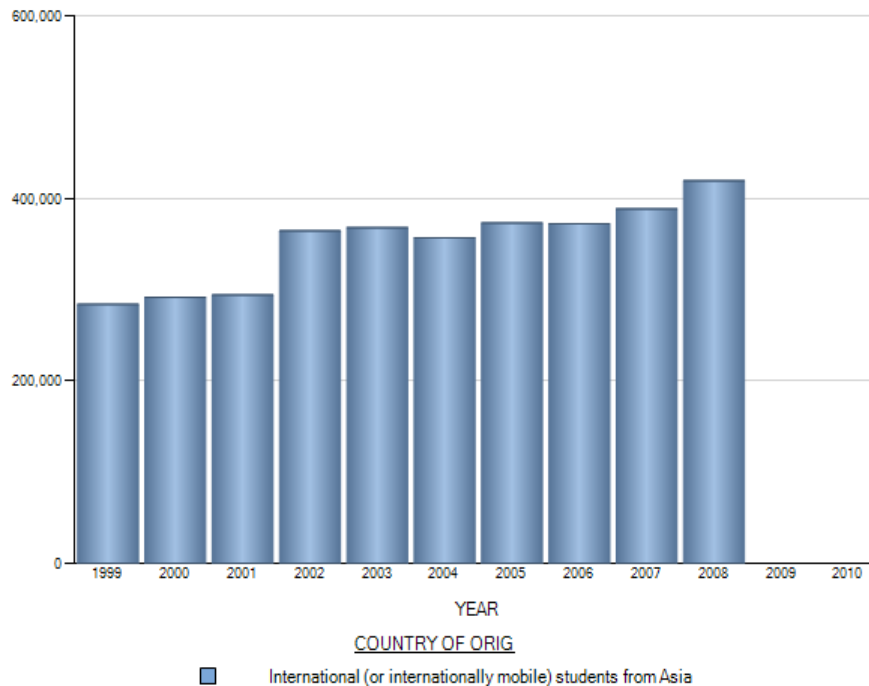
Among these growing populations of international students attending American campuses is a fair proportion of those who do not have proficient English language skills that are necessary for learning in American classrooms. Furthermore, improved English proficiency also benefits learners in various ways. It facilitates East Asian learners to finish their study in American

universities. Beyond that, English is considered an asset in Asian countries. Advanced English skills, therefore, bring students more opportunities in job hunting and career development. Therefore, it is important to offer English language programs to help transition international students into the predominantly monolingual culture that characterizes most American college classrooms. ECAP is one such program.

ECAP is an affiliated program of a public university in the States. Established in 1974 to offer American English and culture courses, ECAP mainly provides intensive language programs for international students. At present, ECAP has two different learning programs: the regular program and the special program. The regular program serves learners identified as needing to improve their language proficiency in order to earn a certificate to attend American universities. Meanwhile, the special program receives learner groups for short term English learning and professional exchange.

The ECAP program offers a broad range of courses that are designed to meet both the general and specific learning objectives of its students. To fulfill this goal, ECAP offers two required classes as well as a variety of elective classes. Two required classes are Reading & Writing, and Listening & Speaking. ECAP also offers elective classes, including some language-related classes, such as Grammar and Pronunciation; some major-related classes, like International Business-English, American Music, English for

Sustainability-Environment, Economics, and Equity; still other are

practice-oriented classes, like Community Service.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study I apply adult learning theory and second language acquisition theory as the identity theory of this research. Both paradigms emphasize the influence of motivation in the learning process, thus I also add motivation theories to this dual framework. Finally, I review a number of empirical studies on East Asian students' learning styles in view of the change of perspectives on their learning styles.

Adult Learning Theory

Although originating in 19th century Europe, adult learning theory has been markedly influenced in the United States by the scholarship of the late-20th century adult educator, Malcolm Knowles (1968) as andragogy. Regularly defined as "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1980, p. 43), andragogy focuses on adult learners in relation to his / her life situation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

The concept of "adulthood" is routinely described in constructivist terms by prominent authors concerned with adult education. Knowles defines an "adult" reflexively as an "individual performing social roles typically assigned by our culture to those it considers to be adults—the role of worker, spouse, parent, responsible citizen, soldier, and the like" (Knowles, 1980, p.

24). Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) similarly associate adulthood with social and professional roles when describing an "adult" as an individual who "has assumed the primary social role of worker, spouse, or parent and has left the primary social role of full-time student" (Taylor & Kroth, 2009, p. 5). Forrest and Peterson further support to these definitions, asserting: "adults are those individuals who have taken on adult roles in society, whether they are the 16-year-old mother or the 87-year-old retiree" (as cited from Taylor & Kroth, 2009, p. 5). As these examples illustrate, Knowles and other important scholars have represented "adulthood" as a socially constructed status that may be assigned to individuals according to their abilities to perform certain historically and geographically contingent criteria.

Darkenwald and Merriam's definition focuses more on adults responsibilities. They believe that adults are those who transfer their social role from full time students to other social responsibilities. Adult is a more social role-determined. In contrast, Forrest and Peterson's definition is more of self-identity. In the new millennium, due to the dynamics of social life, adult's social role and responsibilities are changing. In the language classroom, the adult identity is more of self aware and self identified, rather than defined by the social responsibilities. Thus, my work refers to an "adult" as an individual who is aware of his / her social responsibilities and aims to prepare him or herself for future social roles. Amongst East Asian learners at ECAP

classrooms are college students or candidates with their respective academic
or professional goals. These learners improve their English for the purpose of
fulfilling their goals. Based on this understanding I believe that East Asian
English learners at ECAP are adult learners.

Six assumptions.   Adult learning theory began to gain popularity in
the U.S in the 1960s when Knowles systematically advocated the concept of
andragogy (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Taylor & Kroth, 2009). He identified
four assumptions as fundamental to the praxis of andragogy: 1) adult learners
have self-concept and therefore, are self-directed; 2) adult learners accumulate
experience as a rich resource of learning before coming into classroom; 3)
adult learners' readiness to learn is related to these learning tasks given to
them; 4) the orientation of adult learning is for immediate application of their
learning (Knowles, 1977, pp. 39-48). In his subsequent work, Knowles further
proposes the fifth and sixth assumptions, respectively asserting that adults are
mainly internally rather than externally motivated to learn (Knowles and
Associates, 1984, pp. 9-12), and that adult learners need to know the reason
for learning something (Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 1998).

Knowles' first principle, "self-concept", holds that adults are
self-directed learners, which is derived from the author's observation that
adult learners prefer learning methods with high autonomy, such as small
group learning and task-based learning. Hence, instructors in classrooms of

adult learners are represented as facilitating, rather than dominating the learning process (Knowles, 1977). Importantly, respect for adult identities and agency creates theoretical space in this model for learners to develop personal autonomy as a part of their learning. In order to assist learners with self-concept to gain more control over their learning, Merriam and Caffarella introduce "instructional" models, which were designed to foster classroom learning based on learners' self-directedness and readiness to learn (Merriam, 2001).

However, it should be noticed that learner autonomy is defined in relative terms: as Candy (1991) points out a learner's autonomy is likely to "vary from situation to situation" (p. 309). Educators should not assume that a person who apparently exhibits autonomy and self-direction in one learning situation will necessarily maintain the same level of autonomy and self-direction in all other learning situations. Thus, continuous communication and facilitation is required in a learning context, which is especially important for the first stage of a learning activity (Merriam, 2001, p. 10).

Knowles' second principal, learner experience, asserts the value of adult learners' previous experiences, including their social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their personal and professional experiences, as critical learning sources. A rich body of literature has developed in support of incorporating learners' experiences into the learning process as a way of better engaging

7

them in learning activities (Leyland, 2010). For example, Dominic (2010)

stresses the impact of negative learning experience by observing the enhancing

engagement with learners who have had negative learning experiences can

offer opportunities for further studies and skill development in an accessible

and engaging format. Meanwhile, Shlup and Collins (2010) focus their study

on how the social contexts in which adults live affect the choice of icebreakers

and re-energizers used in adult classroom.

Knowles' notion of "readiness to learn" not only refers to the apparent

exigencies that prompt adults to seek further education, but also the

educational relevance of an adult's prior knowledge and personal experiences.

Of course, these unique aspects of a given learning task can also affect an

adult's readiness to learn and, accordingly, an adult learner's readiness to learn

varies throughout his / her life. According to Havighurst, adulthood could be

divided into different phases: early adulthood (19–30 years old), middle age

(30-60 years old), and later maturity (60 years old and over). At different

phases, adult learners may take on different, socially recognized roles, such as

worker, mate, parent, homeworker, son or daughter of aging parents, citizen,

friend, organization member, religious affiliate, and consumer of leisure time

(as cited from Knowles, 1977, p. 46). As adults assume these roles, they

develop and acquire different knowledge and skills that contribute to their

readiness to learn. Absenteeism and dropout can be understood in terms of

one's readiness to learn insofar as an adult learner may not appreciate given learning materials as a relevant, developmental task.

Although the above principles may seem to apply to all learners, Knowles maintains that adults have a unique perspective on learning vis-à-vis children; he refers to this distinction as "adult learner orientation". For example, Knowles argues that adults view learning as a way to solve life problems they face and, in this regard, may be considered "problem-centered". This is to argue that adults tend to realize immediate application of their learning in the real world. With this orientation in view, teachers and programs should be both person-centered to help the learners, recognize the immediate, personal applications of educational materials, and problem-centered to emphasize the practical uses of a given lesson. Importantly, however, Knowles's notion of adult learner orientation also demands that person-centered educators to respect the autonomy of adult learners by accommodating their own style of learning, rather than teaching adults to learn; hence, the curriculum should focus on specific problems, such as grammar, writing style, or topics specific on a certain major.

At the same time, motivation -especially internal motivation- is regularly cited as a critical component of andragogy. Internal learning motivation refers to the intrinsic pleasure a person may experience by satisfying curiosity with knowledge. A recent study supports this notion,

finding:

> Learners in courses with a low degree of interactivity and lacking in the application and integration of content by the learner are motivationally challenging. In contrast, courses that provide learners with authentic and interactive learning activities, such as animations and simulations, a positive learning climate, and the control over the pace and sequence of instruction are found motivating to the learner. (Kim, 2009, p. 317)

Additionally, another study suggests that collaborative learning activities are an effective way to increase learners' communicative ability and stimulate their motivation (Mesh, 2010).

The last principle is "the need to know," whereby adults are represented as needing to know the reason for learning something before undertaking the learning task. Knowles (1998) describes this principle in cost-benefit terms, explaining that adult learners will explore the benefit of learning something and the potential loss of not gaining the knowledge before choosing whether to pursue educational materials.

Andragogy and pedagogy. There has long been an andragogy-pedagogy debate. Pedagogy practices the traditional, teacher-centered teaching approach. Andragogy, on the contrary, advocates student-centered and autonomous teaching approach. Andragogy and pedagogy were considered in opposition to one another. However, recent studies find these two approaches as a continuum, depending on the degree of learners' autonomy in learning process (Littlewood, 1999). A dependent learner needs more introductory material. He/she appreciates lecture, drill, and

immediate correction. An autonomous and self-directed learner expects to engage in independent projects, student-directed discussions, and discovery learning. A learner's autonomy is believed to be determined by his/her individuality (Merriam, 2001, p10).

Based on these six assumptions, adult learning researchers argue that adult learners come into classroom with clear learning goals, which could be divided into three categories: "to enhance the ability of adult learning; to foster transformational learning as central to self-directed learning; to promote emancipatory learning and social action as an integral part of self-directed learning" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 290). With clear goals, they actively commit to learning that they recognize as relevant to their professional development and daily activities (Knowles, 1977, p. 44). In the learning process, adult learners' life experience provides a rich resource to facilitate learning given appropriately used. Thus, adult learners' life experience should be integrated into learning process. And also, adults are self-directed; they prefer learning methods with high autonomy, like small group learning and task-based learning. In classroom of adult learners, they should be given the right to decide their own learning methods and activities (Knowles, 1977).

Application in second language learning.   In order to assist adult learners to succeed in classroom, the instructor should serve as animator and facilitator to assist learning process to provide orientation, support and

guidance. Assistance is especially critical in the first stage of a learning task

(Grow, 1991, p. 130). For L2 adult learners, research on teachers as facilitators

in higher education supports strong communication and problem solving skills

(as cited from Weisz, 1990). Additionally, cooperative learning strategies, such

as teaching small-group skills, effective communication, and critical thinking

skills, prove effective for adult learning (Chlup & Collins, 2010). Mesh's study

(2010) supports that collaborative learning activities give learners more

control over study time and location, and therefore, improve learning effect.

Collaborative activities foster improvement of comprehension skills in

second-language writing and reading, while face-to-face lessons are found to

be useful for the development of conversation and listening comprehension

(Mesh, 2010).

Second Language Theories

     This section briefly reviews the language acquisition theories in general

and second language acquisition (SLA) theories in particular. Based on

Masahiko and Ovando (2003), I categorize language acquisition theories into

four types: Skinner's behavioristic school of thought, Chomskyan generative

school of thought, language as a socioculturally mediated product, and

multicultural and bilingual issues in language education.

     Four theoretical approaches of language acquisition.   From the

1950s to1970s, the scholarship of language acquisition was influenced by

Skinner and Chomsky's theories in succession. The 1980s and the 1990s

witnessed a major shift from Chomsky's generative theory to the study of

sociocultural contexts of language acquisition, and how that influence students

language acquisition and identity building.

The first classic theoretical approach to language is represented by B.F.

Skinner. Skinner asserted that human beings acquire language through their

experience. Positive reinforcement is a more effective way of teaching.

Skinner exclusively stresses the importance of environment and experience on

learning effect.

In contrast to Skinner's theory, Chomsky establishes the generative

grammar theory which claims that human beings have an innate aptitude,

language acquisition device (LAD), to acquire the common framework among

different languages (Masahiko & Ovando, 2003). Chomsky's theory

symbolizes a revolution in modern linguistics. His framework, however, does

not give attention to the influence of sociocultural and sociolinguistic elements,

which play a major role in language acquisition. In the 1970s, the emergence

of studies on sociocultural and sociolinguistic research addressed these issues.

From the late 1970s to the 1990s, the scholarship of language

acquisition shifted from generative theory to the influence of sociocultural

elements on language acquisition. Theorists of this school emphasize the close

relation between language acquisition and socialization. They argue that the

learners dynamically and continuously interact with their social environments. The sociocultural school perceives language as a socioculturally mediated product. Hymes (1974) claims that, as a social product, language needs to be produced not only grammatically correct but also socioculturally appropriate to achieve successful communication, which he terms as "communicative competence". Other scholars also address that the variations of sociocultural contexts cause significant variations in language acquisition (as cited from Masahiko & Ovando, 2003). Because of the close ties between language acquisition and socialization, individual's experience and knowledge should be taken into account in their own language acquisition. Furthermore, due to the wide individual (Nelson, 1981) as well as cultural (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) differences, children should be recognized as active agents of their sociocultural environments rather than passive recipients. As a sociocultural product, language is mediated partly through learners' developing use and control of it.

Learning process is also socioculturally mediated. Vygotsky (1978) suggests that language learners interact with the society in a dynamic system, in which learners and social contexts influence and construct one another. In this dynamic system, language acquisition is mediated through face-to-face interaction and sharing, such as joint problem solving and discussion (Mitchell & Myles, 2004, p. 195).

The latest school of language acquisition study mainly focuses on

multicultural and bilingual issues in language education. Scholars argue that

schools should empower minority students by advocating their languages and

cultures. They further stress that sociocultural and linguistic differences alone

do not determine students' academic performance in schools. Many situational

elements, such as teacher-student interaction or peer collaboration, students'

self-image, and teacher's expectations for students, also impact students'

school performance (Masahiko & Ovando, 2003, p. 580). To effectively help

minority students succeed in classroom, schools need to give attention to

learning environments, teacher quality and teacher awareness of

empowerment. "Schools need to create a learning environment that is

culturally and linguistically responsive while simultaneously expanding the

horizons of their students" (Masahiko & Ovando, 2004, p. 583). In the

meantime, teacher quality is critical to the quality of multicultural and

bilingual programs. Teachers also need to gain the understanding of the

elements in order to better facilitate language learners and empower them in

classroom (Ada, 1986). In this sense, "not only minority students, their parents

and communities, but also teachers themselves should be empowered for more

effective teaching" (Masahiko & Ovando, 2004, p. 583).

    Second language acquisition theories.   As an important subcategory

of language acquisition, second language acquisition (SLA) has long history in

the U.S for its immigration tradition.

One focal point in the field of SLA is the multiple variables that impact second language acquisition. Thomas and Collier's (1997) prism model illustrates the process of SLA as composed of four interrelated and interdependent components: 1) sociocultural, 2) linguistic, 3) academic, and 4) cognitive. Sociocultural component consists of everyday life experience in all contexts –school and broader social setting, as well as learner individual variables, such as self-esteem, anxiety, or other affective factors; linguistic component is learners' linguistic development in first and second languages as well as in all linguistic aspects, including vocabulary, grammar, phonology, semantics, etc; the third component, academic, refers to learner's acquisition of specific subject knowledge; cognitive development is a natural and subconscious process of language acquisition. When a learner is in the process of acquiring a second language, these four components interrelate and interact simultaneously. Thomas and Collier (1997) stress that the four components should be balanced in second language acquisition. Learners' social and cultural background, given appropriately integrated into language teaching, could enhance language acquisition; misunderstanding and misuse of this information, however, can hinder learners' second language acquisition (p. 45).

Collier (1995) also argues that it is important for second language educators to be aware of students' social and cultural background rather than

only their language knowledge when stepping into second language classrooms.

Other education research findings also demonstrate that students learn best

when lessons connect to their past experiences (Ovando, 2006). However, the

sociocultural context differs among each school setting and each individual

learner. Therefore, L2 teachers need to incorporate multicultural perspectives

to second language teaching, to individualize and localize their teaching

materials and instruction skills.

Another research focal in SLA is the orality-literacy relationship and

curriculum design. Traditionally, orality and literacy were considered two

separate language skills. Recent studies, however, suggest that oral language

and literacy should be viewed as a continuum in language acquisition. It is

argued that a program with balanced literacy better assists learners' English

learning (Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Goldenberg & Sullivan, 1994; Moll,

1988).

Applications of second language acquisition theories to classroom

teaching and learning.   To effectively facilitate SLA process, attention

should be given to teaching methods, classroom interaction, as well as the

broader social settings of language acquisition. Focusing on teaching

methods, curriculum and lesson plans should be carefully designed to

include learners' background knowledge and assist them to explore new

knowledge through interactive learning tasks. L2 teachers are encouraged to

17

collaborate with teachers of other subject areas in a variety of ways.

Concerning teacher-student relation and interaction, studies advocate

student-centered, interactive classroom learning. In this learning model,

teachers serve as the guide or facilitator to assist and guide learners to explore

new knowledge and new ways of perceiving the world through their

participation and problem solving. As to the broader social setting, it is

suggested that closer school–community relations should be developed so that

learners have access to a richer and more complex range of language contexts.

Closer connection with social setting also facilitates the transfer of learner

academic learning into practices.

In spite of the numerous studies conducted on SLA, there is no

universally suited approach for second language education in different contexts

because of the diversity of learners. The complexity of learner population

requires varied teaching methods accordingly. Furthermore, the traits of a

specific group are also dynamic, such as the East Asian second language learner

group (Littlewood, 2001). It has been argued that individual differences are

more significant than group differences (Littlewood, 2001). Thus August and

Hakuta (1997) suggest that second language educators focus on individual

learners to assist their learning process.

Motivation Theories

In this section I attempt to generally introduce motivation studies in

relation to SLA. Five approaches of motivation studies will be summarized

below: Lambert and Gardner's social psychological approach, ability theories,

self-determination theory, process model, Dörnyei's extended framework, and

social constructivist approach of motivation.

　　　Social psychological approach.　Related to SLA, the social

psychological approach is a significantly influential school in motivation study.

Amongst the most accomplished scholars in this school are Wallace Lambert

and Robert Gardner. Gardner defines L2 motivation as "the extent to which an

individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so

and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (1985, p. 10). Gardner,

Lambert as well as their other colleagues and students, established the social

psychological motivation framework in SLA. This motivation construct

includes four aspects that the authors believe to be important in SLA: the

social and cultural background, individual learner differences, language

acquisition context and outcomes (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992; 1993). These

four aspects of motivation are in the interplay with one another in SLA

process.

　　　Another important contribution of the Gardner model is his categorizing

of two forms of motivation: integrative and instrumental motivation (Gardner

& Lambert, 1972). Integrative motivation refers to learners' positive attitude

toward L2 community, identity and culture, which leads to a willingness to

interact with and understand them. Instrumental motivation is defined as

motivation driven by pragmatic gains out of L2 learning. It is believed that

integrative motivation is a more positive and sustainable driving force for L2

learners. Gardner and Lambert's study (1959) also demonstrates that

integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are closely correlated.

Motivation in SLA is dynamic and continuous. This motivation model was

later complemented and extended by many other scholars. Clement and

Kruidenier (1983) find in their Canadian research that, in addition to an

instrumental orientation, there are also three other orientations of SLA:

knowledge, friendship and travel orientations, which were traditionally

included in integrative motivation. Following Clement and Kruidenier's

finding, Dörnyei (1998) identifies three loosely related dimensions of a

broadly conceived integrative motivational subsystem in investigating young

adult foreign language learners in Hungary. The four dimensions are: 1)

interest in foreign languages, cultures, and people; 2) desire of a broader view

and avoidance of provincialism; 3) desire for new stimuli and challenge; and 4)

desire for involving into a new community.

Dörnyei's framework overlaps with Clement and Kruidenier's findings,

for instance, interest in foreign languages, cultures and people can be related

to Clement and Kruidenier's "sociocultural orientation"; the desire to broaden

one's view and avoid provincialism shares the idea of knowledge and travel

orientation; the desire for new stimuli and challenges has common ground

with knowledge, friendship and travel orientations; and the desire to integrate

into a new community is connected to travel and friendship orientations

(Dörnyei, 1998, p. 275).

     Self-perception theories.   The second theory group of motivation is

self-perception theories. This theory group argues that learners' motivation

originates from their self-perception of their ability to make achievement in

learning process. If L2 learners perceive themselves as capable of finishing a

learning task, they gain motivation to implement this task. This group includes

attribution theory, self-efficacy theory and self-worth theory (Dörnyei, 1998).

The guiding principle of attribution theory is the assumption that the way

humans view their own past successes and failures affect their future

achievements (Dörnyei, 1998). Self-efficacy theory refers to "people's

judgments of their capabilities to carry out certain specific tasks, and

accordingly, their sense of efficacy will determine their choice of the activities

attempted, as well as the level of their aspirations, the amount of effort exerted,

and the persistence displayed" (Dörnyei, 1998, p. 119). Self-worth theory sets

the need for self-acceptance as the highest human priority (Covington, 1992),

and argues that in reality, the dynamics of school achievement largely reflect

learner's attempts to protect and aggrandize self-perceptions of ability (as cited

from Dörnyei, 1998)

Self-determination theory.   As a development of Gardner's social

psychological model, self-determination theory is extensively studied and

widely cited in the field of SLA. This approach holds the notion that the

degree of determination individuals gains over learning tasks determines their

motivation. The most significant contributors to self-determination theory are

Deci and Ryan (1985, 2000). They create the concepts extrinsic/intrinsic

motivation in 1985. According to Deci and Ryan, intrinsic motivation refers to

"the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some

separable consequence", extrinsic motivation is defined as "a construct that

pertains whenever an activity is done in order to attain some separable

outcome" (2000, p. 60).

Different from social psychological approach, which deems extrinsic

motivation as an antagonistic form of motivation, self-determination theorists

regard amotivation, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation as a

continuum. Scholars further divide extrinsic motivation into four categories:

external regulation, introjection, identification, integration, depending on

people's control over their own performance (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier &

Ryan, 1991). External regulation refers to response to meet external demand

or gain external profit (Ryan & Deci, 2000, pp. 61-62); introjection moves

toward internal motivation as a type of internal regulation performed aiming

to maintain self-esteem or self pride; identification means a person identifies

the importance of a certain behavior and takes it; mostly dominated by

internal motivation, integration is the process of fully assimilating identified

regulation of part of the self.

Process model.   The fourth approach of motivation study is the

process model. According to Julkunen (2000), the characteristics of process

model is its emphasis on learning motivation as a continuously interactive

process between the learner and the environment. Based on this understanding,

it is believed that the learning motivation should be studied in actual learning

context (Julkunen, 2000). In process model, learners' general motivation and

situation specific motivation are believed to interact with each other and

produce learners' situation specific action tendency, which decides learners'

allocation of their personal resources to complete a learning task. In learning

process, appraisal exerts strong impact on the situation specific action, task

performance and result assessment (Julkunen, 2000). The result assessment

shows students' competence and furthermore, impacts their future study

performance. Thus, motivation is a (continuous) process whereby

"goal-directed activities are instigated and sustained" (Pintrich and Schunk,

1996, p. 4).

Dörnyei's extended framework.   Based on previous studies,

including Gardner's model, Dörnyei (1994) develops an extended framework

of L2 motivation, which categorizes three levels of motivation elements: the

language level, the learner level and the learning situation level. At the language level, there are integrative motivation and instrumental motivation, as introduced above; at the learner level, motivation factors are needs for achievement and self-confidence, including language use anxiety, perceived L2 competence, causal attributions, and self-efficacy; at the learning situation level factors range from course-specific components, including learner's interest, relevance, expectancy, and satisfaction, to teacher-specific components, such as affiliative motive and authority type, and further to group-specific components, goal-orientedness to group cohesion. This framework gives special attention to the learning situation level factors. It emphasizes that specific learning situation and interaction to a large degree decides learner's motivation to learn.

Social constructivist approach. The last approach I would like to include is Williams and Burden's social constructive approach (1997). Williams and Burden divide motivation factors into internal factors and external factors. Internal factors originate from learners themselves, such as learners' interest and value of learning activities, their mastery, sense of agency and self-concept. External factors come from the outside environment, such as learners' interaction with parents, teachers and peers, the learning environment and the broader social context. Social constructivists of this theory school divide learning process into three stages: at the first stage,

24

individuals find reasons for undertaking a particular activity; at the second

sage, individuals make decision to implement learning activities; at the last

stage, they need the effort required to complete the learning activity. William

and Burden (1997) point out that motivation needs not only be initiated but

also sustained in learning process. Similar to the process approach, social

constructivists also emphasize that these factors in this model are sustaining

and mutually interactive.

Internal Summary

Hereto I have briefly summarized five approaches in motivation theory.

Motivation and adult learning theory are intensively studied in SLA research.

The relationship between motivation and second language learning has

triggered a considerable number of studies (Dörnyei, 1994, 2010, 2003).

Masgoret and Gardner's (2003) research findings demonstrate that among

these variables that impact learners' L2 acquisition performance, motivation

makes the most significant contribution. To summarize, previous studies

support the conclusion that motivation exerts important influence on second

language acquisition and among adult learners. Goal setting, learning strategy

selection and perception of self learning ability are all salient factors that

impact the learning effect.

Guiding Principles from the Review of Literature

Adult learning theory, second language theory and motivation theory, despite of their different focuses and perspectives overlap one another in many studies and show commonalities.

Adult learning theory and second language acquisition theory share some common grounds. The first commonality is that both theories stress that learner's background knowledge, from their sociocultural experience to language learning experience, impact their learning.

Secondly, both theories address learner's individuality for effective teaching and learning. Adult learning theory states that adult learners are problem-centered learners. Therefore, SLA classes should be designed based on the problems learners want to solve. SLA theories highlight learner's individuality in multiple levels, including sociocultural, academic, linguistic and cognitive.

The third shared view of both theories is their affirmation of the positive impact of motivation, especially motivation originated from learners' internal interest. However, in spite of the significance of motivation in learning process, there is no universally accepted approach to motivate learners. Studies show that several principles could benefit SLA programs and help SAL educators better facilitate learning process in classroom. First, motivation depends on interaction among people as well as between people with the environment. Second, motivation is dynamic. Effective motivation should take individuality

26

into consideration.

Lastly, the three theories all recognize that learners are active knowledge seekers if appropriately taught. Effective learning happens when learners gain autonomy in learning process. For example, adult learners are believed to be self-directed in learning. They come into classroom with clear learning goals: to serve their professional development and to realize self-actualization (Maslow, 1943; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). Self-determination theory argues that learners are more motivated to learn when gaining high autonomy (Dörnyei, 2003; Ryan & Deci, 2000). They have potential to be active learners if appropriately motivated. Therefore, teachers should serve as the facilitators and animators to help students learn, in classroom and beyond that (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999).

Despite of their common places, these three theory approaches address learning process from different perspectives. Adult learning theory believes that adult learners understand their own needs and expectations when entering second language learning classrooms. Effective learning happens when learners' learning objectives are given attention to and their experience is used in classroom teaching as learning resource. Language learning theory analyses effective learning from the perspective of learning process. It argues that when learners' knowledge of first language is taken into account, they would achieve higher performance in second language learning classroom. Motivation theory

highlights the impact of teacher-student interaction on learning outcomes.

Asian Students Learning Style

Traditionally, East Asian learners are portrayed as passive learners. They were believed to view the teacher as an authority figure and a knowledge giver rather than a facilitator in classroom (Liu, 1998). However, recent studies have challenged this stereotype by showing an array of characteristics presenting in this group (Aoki & Smith, 1996; Ho and Crookall, 1995; Littlewood, 1999, 2000, 2010). First, East Asian learners are found communication-oriented. They have a clear preference to communication-oriented than to authority-oriented or form-oriented teaching (Littlewood, 2010), and are motivated to explore knowledge and find their own answers. At the same time, East Asian learners advocate teacher as the authority in classroom. They like to participate to specific forms of autonomous class activities. Thus, scholars begin to study the forms of classroom autonomy that best suit them (Littlewood, 2010). Holec in his study (as cited in Littlewood, 1999) summarizes two forms of autonomy: proactive autonomy and reactive autonomy. According to Holec, proactive autonomy is the autonomy that enables learners to "take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and techniques, and evaluate what has been acquired" (Littlewood, 1999, p.75). Reactive autonomy, on the other hand,

does not require learners to create their own learning directions. Learners are given learning directions, but they organize their resources, learning activities and evaluation among them to make sure their learning objectives are achieved (Littlewood, 1999, pp. 75-76). Specifically for East Asian learners, their way of gaining and using autonomy is different from Western learners. East Asian learners value formal and teacher-led learning (Littlewood, 1999). They view teachers as authorities and thus, expect teachers to evaluate their learning. They also tend to avoid challenging other peers. Yet, East Asian learners like to explore new knowledge and advocate cooperative work in group or in pair (Littlewood, 2000). Based on their learning habits, we argue that learning autonomy for East Asian students should be redefined in view of their learning styles.

Based on these updated studies, it is suggested that teachers working with East Asian learners not simply accept or reject the findings on autonomy and motivation. Rather, they should examine these discussions in light of the East Asian learners' learning situations and individual differences by matching different aspects of autonomy with individual learners (Littlewood, 1999). A key factor is how compatible are these strategies with learners' own expectations and preferences. There is no "universally suitable method" for all learners or all teaching situations. Teaching methods should be selected based on teacher's understanding of the characteristics of each learner's individual

situation (Littlewood, 2010).

In this thesis I offer adult learning theory and second language learning theory as parallel identity concepts to define the East Asian learners at ECAP. Motivation theory comes to facilitate this identity framework. Learners' social and cultural background and their individualities require ECAP to anticipate the need for culturally responsive motivation. The review of East Asian learners' learning styles specifies the research context for my study subjects. Thus I believe that the combined theoretical framework is comprehensive in guiding my research.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Question

In the literature review section I have described important research on

adult learning and second language acquisition that supports this designation.

In this study I would like to examine how these notions are applied in ECAP.

My research mainly focused on how ECAP language classes and

extracurricular activities facilitate language learning in view of its teaching

philosophy, curriculum, faculty, classroom instruction and extracurricular

activities. In this study my primary research question is: *How does ECAP*

prepare adult second language learners from East Asia to acquire English and

American culture?

Specifically, I want to answer the following questions in this research

and understand the differences and similarities among ECAP administrators,

teachers and students' perspectives.

1. How does ECAP take into account adult East Asian learners' previous social

and cultural experience to facilitate learning?

2. How does ECAP facilitate learners' English acquisition in ways that address

the specific needs and interests of individuals?

3. How does ECAP support adult East Asian learners' autonomy in learning

process?

Research Design

My work draws upon classroom observations, participant interviews,

and ECAP documents as data sources for my analyses. At present, there are in

all six levels of classes in ECAP language program: Beginner 1, Beginner 2,

Intermediate 1, Intermediate 2, Advanced 1, and Advanced 2. Each level

represents an eight week-long curriculum. Learners finish one level and pass

the test could move on to the next level.

At first I collected documents from ECAP administrators, including the

demographic distribution of its student population, its curriculum, activity

calendar and poster, the presentation for new student orientation as well as

some class exercises. I wanted to know how many East Asian learners were at

the ECAP session I studies; which classes they were in; and what classes and

activities are provided to them.

My observation was conducted in one ECAP Advanced 2 level class for

the consideration that Advanced 2 level learners almost finish their study in

this program, and therefore, their academic accomplishments and concerns

demonstrated the effectiveness of this program. The classroom observation

lasted for four weeks. During these four weeks I observed two required classes,

one Listening & Speaking, and one Reading & Writing, twice every week for

a period of thirty minutes every time. I also observed two elective classes,

Business Case Study and English for Engineering and Electronic, once a week

and 30 minutes every time. I also observed two slightly irregular ECAP

activities, namely: a Reading Theatre event and a Valentine's Day Brownie

Decorating Contest. My focus was how East Asian learners participated in

these activities and how their participation benefited their English learning.

I interviewed fifteen people for this study. My interview participants

consists of three groups: program administrators, instructors and learners I

firstly interviewed four program administrators, each of whom occupied

distinctive roles, including: program director, associate director, assistant

director and student advisor. Throughout these interviews, I sought to

understand administrators' attitudes toward curriculum as the program's

designers and operators, the best way to teach East Asian learners, program

quality control, communication among learners, teachers and administrators,

and how administrators help address learners' difficulties learning English. I

also interviewed the four teachers who taught the classes I observed. I wanted

to know their education background and work experience, their perception of

East Asian learners at ECAP, and how they facilitate these learners based on

their experience and perception. Finally, I interviewed seven East Asian

learners divided into three groups according to their national and regional

origins. These divisions were instituted because I believe that learners from a

common country or region may feel more encouraged to share their views

when explicitly grouped according to similarities. Even so, the learner

participants of my interviews encompass a broad range of identities, including:

a female Korean learner in Advanced 2, a female Japanese learner who also

attended Advanced 2, and her Japanese friend in Advanced 1, and three

Chinese and one Taiwanese learner as a group.

Participant Recruitment

Participant recruitment was carried out with the assistance of ECAP

administrators. They informed me that most East Asian learners enrolled in

this program were adult learners. Some of them were undergraduate students

here in the U.S or in their home country; others may had finished their

undergraduate study.

All participants in my interviews –the four administrators, four teachers

and seven East Asian learners- were recruited as volunteers. The four

administrators were included because they worked with East Asian learners in

a multitude of capacities, including program design, program quality control,

policy consultation, communication with students and student issue solving. I

asked to interview the four teacher participants because they worked closely

with East Asian learners at Advanced 2 level. Finally, I recruited seven learner

participants, six from the aforementioned Advanced 2 class that I observed and one from Advanced 1 class.

Although there were in all seven East Asian learners in that class: one Korean, one Japanese, one Taiwanese and four Chinese learners, one male Chinese learner could not attend my interview because of schedule constraints; the other six learners, however, were consistently receptive to participate. When I interviewed the Japanese learner, he came with his friend who was studying at Advanced 1 class of ECAP. The Advanced 1 learner also showed interest in this study, which attracted me to invite his participation in that interview. I interviewed the only Korean learner in this class separately.

I interviewed the program administrators individually based on the consideration of their different obligations and focus. I interviewed the teachers in a group to facilitate a group discussion of their teaching experience. I conducted three learner interviews: I interviewed two Japanese learners in a group, three Chinese learners and one Taiwanese learner in one group, and the Korean learner individually. This arrangement was made based on the consideration that learners communicate more comfortably with their country people.

To maintain the confidentiality of interview participants, aspects of interviewees' personal identities have been changed for the purposes of anonymity, such as their nationalities, genders and age information.

Site Entry

Before class observation, I sent each ECAP teacher an email introducing myself and my study. I wanted to establish open communication with them at the beginning of my research. The teachers scheduled observation time with me and, shortly thereafter, I began attending classes according to our set schedule. Teachers introduced me to the class at the beginning of my first observations, after which I took my seat at the back of the classroom. During group discussions or paired work sessions, I walked around the class to access different learner discussions.

As a student-researcher, I struggled between two identities during my observation: on the one hand, I wanted to identify myself as a graduate student to establish good relationship with learners, which I believe is critical for accessing in-depth communication and attaining a better understanding of their learning experiences. Thus, I regularly spoke with learners during less formal portions of class, such as before and after class durations, or the 10 minute-long break sessions. Within two class visits, I had become friends with most learners and they soon received me more as a classmate than a researcher. As Clandinin and Murphy suggested, I did fall in love with my participants (2009, p. 599). On the other hand, I attempted to keep a certain distance from my participants so that I might maintain a dispassionate attitude toward their learning experience and this program.

I found it very difficult to balance these two roles sometimes-conflicting imperatives; my challenges came from two aspects. The first challenge is best understood in terms of my own limitations as a first-time researcher: I often forgot my role in the field and assumed the "learner" identity with which I was already familiar and toward which my peer-participants continually encouraged me. Admittedly, I attempted to answer teachers' questions in class more than once. Another challenge came from the teachers and learners. Sometimes teachers took me in the classroom conversation. For example, once a teacher asked me to share my college experience to the class and give the class some suggestions based upon that. In these situations I intended to give short and neutral response to keep researcher position. Other times learners asked me to help them on their tasks. I had to keep explaining to them "Sorry, I can't help with that".

Data Collection

This section introduces the data collection process. One virtue of qualitative research is its alternative data sources (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.27). Specifically in this study, data was collected from three sources: program documents, classroom observation as well as participant interview.

I started data collection with contacting the program director. Fortunately, he agreed to help with my study and presented some of their

program documents to assist my understanding the program operation as well as its East Asian learners, including the demographic distribution of its students, teacher and administrator culture preparation materials, its academic calendar, programs activities.

During my interviews with other program administrators, they also shared with me some program documents they took charge of. Documents, such as student's orientation presentation. Later when I entered classroom, the teachers sent me their lesson plans and classroom exercises.

The second data resource is observation. I observed four ECAP classes at advanced 2 levels: one Listening & Speaking, one Reading & Writing, two elective classes: one Engineering and Electronic and one Business Case Study. Besides that, I also attended two ECAP extracurricular activities: one Reading Theatre, one Valentine Brownie Decorating Contest. For both class and event observations I recorded the class/activity goals. My other focus during observations was teacher-student, administrator-student interaction. During the observations I conducted intensive note-taking and later placed them in separate folders named by the events and dates.

The third resource was interview. Seventeen participants were interview in all: 4 administrators, who will be named as administrator 1, administrator 2, administrator 3 and administrator 4; 4 teachers, named as teacher 1 to teacher 4; and at last, 7 learner participants, and learner 1 to learner 7. For the

administrator group, I interviewed them separately for the consideration of position hierarchy. Teachers were interviewed as a group to facilitate communication and mutual inspiration. Since they taught different classes independent from one other, and were all full-time teachers in this program, therefore there was no known risk of employment competition among them. Learners were grouped based on their language for interviews. The rationale for this arrangement was that learners speaking the same language had stronger ties among themselves than with other students. It was also hoped that group conversation stimulated more memory and thought of their learning experience at ECAP.

The interview questions were semi-structured based on my communication with two committee members. For every group, twelve to fourteen leading questions were drafted. During the interview, some questions were further dug into than others based on learners' response. As Stake suggested, I conducted these interviews intuitively (2010). The interview were recorded and transcribed at a later time and kept in separate folders named with group name.

Data Analysis

In ethnographic research, data analysis is the attempt of "seeking sweetwater" (Stake, 2010). It is a continuously ongoing process. For this study,

I embarked upon preparing for data analysis during literature review, in and after data collection. In view of my understanding of the shared concepts emerging from the literature review, I drafted the themes to structure my research, which I call framing the skeleton. During data collection, I took some memos on interesting moments, which served as the patches for my later analysis (Stake, 2010).

After finishing collecting data, I went back to read and reread the data for meaningful codes before proceeding to analysis. The codes of this study emerged in two ways. Some of them were designated during interviews, such as self-directedness, sociocultural background, individuality, autonomy, East Asian learners' learning style, administrative facilitation, teacher facilitation, motivation, which guided developing the interview questions. Others were created during the analysis, including personal distance and practical concern.

For the purpose of catching the interesting thoughts in the interviews, I also took some memos, which later served as the patches of my findings and analysis. Some of them focused on a certain term or sentence, others reflected my thought on cultural issues.

After framing the structure and gathering the patches, I headed to data analysis to respond to the research question. It is both descriptive and interpretive to answer how the program works (Stake, p. 150). I firstly took the data apart and then organized them under different themes for more

systematically thematic discussion. Later in the analysis section some issues that stood out in the findings were put together again for more systematic discussion (Stake, 2010). To stick my analysis to the goal of this study I continually went back on the research question (p.134).

According to Stake's definition, this study adopted "mapping the woods" rather than "chopping the trees" approach for the purpose of capturing an overview of learners' experience at ECAP (2010). Another consideration for the thematic arrangement of this study was to avoid chopping the wrong trees. For instance, in a later conversation with a participant of this study she admitted using some overweight terms in the interview due to lack of thorough consideration.

Limitations

In this section, two potential limitations are addressed.

The first limitation is my research population and sample. In this study, East Asian learners were categorized as one group since they share some common features concerning their cultural backgrounds and learning styles. Some of their common features are their sociocultural orientation and teaching styles at school settings. Four East Asian countries and regions included in this research, namely, Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Taiwanese, all share a collectivist-orientated traditional culture. Thus, people from these countries and regions hold similar social and cultural values. In continuation, the

traditional teaching and learning styles in these countries are more

teacher-centered. Although the teaching and learning models in these countries

are evolving with time, it is necessary to bring it to the readers' attention that

these adult learners currently enrolled in ECAP classes entered ESL

classrooms in their home countries around a decade ago. That means these

learners were taught in more traditional models. Based on these considerations,

I group learners from these four countries and regions together. However,

despite these similarities, I am conscious not to generalize them into a

homogeneous group. In this research both their sociocultural backgrounds and

individualities were discussed.

Another possible limitation of this research is its time period. Because

of ECAP's schedule and my availability, I observed four week ECAP classes

rather than a whole session of eight weeks. To make my study as credible as

possible, I observed the second half of an Advanced 2 class. By observing the

second half of ECAP study at advanced 2 level, I gained better understanding

of learners' performance and what concerns they still have before graduating

from ECAP. I also attended other ECAP activities to capture a full picture of

adult East Asian learners' learning experience at ECAP.

Triangulation

In an attempt to account for my own positionality as a researcher, I

present evidence from three sources, as briefed before. My rationale for using this triangulation strategy is that data represented by one source might be checked against data from another. To clarify, I triangulated my research at two levels: the literature synthesis level and the data collection level. Firstly, I reviewed three theoretical schools to construct my guiding principles. Then, I collected data from three sources (i.e. observation, interviews and program documents). In my interviews I invited three group interviews to share their views at ECAP.

As a researcher, I adopted the etic perspective espoused by traditional anthropologists insofar as I attempted to examine the ECAP program from the "outside". Grounded in both original data and leading theoretical insights, my research represents a sincere effort to meet the standards of more practiced ethnographers.

At the same time, however, I was also aware of the inevitably emic status that I derived from being an East Asian English learner myself. Similar with my subjects, I have also experienced the struggles of learning English and adapting to the American culture. As Corbin and Strauss state, research findings are a product of the data plus what the researcher brings to the analysis (2008, p. 33). Rather than regarding these experiences as a source of bias, I believe my English learning and using experience helps me better understand some of the challenges and expectations that help define learners'

experiences in ECAP. I am confirmed that a combination of etic and emic

perspectives will increase the validity of my research.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

This section introduces my findings based on interviews with the three

groups of participants.

Interview Findings

ECAP administrator interviews. Understanding of program

administration is imperative to understand this program. ECAP administrators

are responsible for designing the program, including its notion, objectives and

operation model. They also supervise the program daily operation to control

its quality and development. In view of their parts ECAP, I interviewed ECAP

administrators who work with East Asian students in different aspects.

Four ECAP administrators were interviewed in this study: the program

director, the associate director, the assistant director and the student advisor.

The director designs the program as a whole. He also supervises the daily

operation of the program in general and quality control. The associate director

takes charge of teacher recruitment and regular program operation. The

assistant director specifically works with special program to provide timely

administrative support. The student advisor is mainly responsible for

immigration issues as well as some other institutional and student personal

issues.

Administrator interviews focused on three topics: administrators'

educational backgrounds and work experience related to East Asian learners,

their understanding of East Asian learners, and how they provide

administrative support to East Asian learners at ECAP. In the following section

I will address these issues separately.

Education backgrounds and work experience. As educational

background and work experience are connected to an educator's professional

vision and understanding of different learner groups, I inquired about each

administrator's background and experience in my interviews.

Three of the four administrators I interviewed have MA degrees, and

one has a doctorate. Amongst them one administrator's education mainly

focused on language and language education for his Masters; another

administrator studied on communication and education leadership; the other

two touched both fields. The administrator who helped structure curriculum

and select textbooks mentioned that his background connected him to the

field.

The interviews also revealed that all four administrators had experience working in East Asian countries. One of them had worked in China for three years; the other three had worked in Japan, ranging from three to seven years; one of them also had worked in Korea. They all suggested that working in a certain country helped them know people in that country more deeply. The administrator who worked in China asserted that he felt Chinese learners at ECAP very receptive and communicative when he first came to ECAP. Another administrator who worked in Japan asserted Japanese students as good instructions followers, while Chinese students usually violated orders in public places.

Furthermore, their overseas work experience was also related to language education. (Two out of the four administrators had worked as English teachers; one had worked as both a teacher and an administrator; one had worked as a program administrator.)

Understanding of adult East Asian learners at ECAP.   As ECAP administrators introduced, East Asian learners were traditionally a large group at ECAP. They used to be the largest population in ECAP. At present, East Asian learners still comprise on average approximately 40 percent of the total students population in every session. The exact percentage varies with season.

Administrators viewed East Asian learners as sharing several

characteristics. First, they were portrayed as certificate-oriented. Administrator 1 told me that most of East Asian learners came to ECAP because they needed the English qualification certificate to go to American universities. That is to say, most of them have very clear learning objectives, which is to get good transcripts and certificates for university admission. Guided by their objectives, East Asian learners were considered as having "serious learning style". As administrator 2 described it, "they like to learn concrete things and the knowledge that they could immediately apply in the larger real world outside the classroom". Administrator 2 also suggested that East Asian learners were comfortable with lecture-style classes and did not appreciate too much input of other students in classroom.

However, one downside of this learning habit is the weak oral skill. All administrators suggested that East Asian learners were comparatively weak at oral skills and strong at writing and grammar. Because of this learning style, they did not often volunteer to speak in class. Administrator 3 mentioned that East Asian learners' learning habit was inconsistent with ECAP teaching philosophy: communication. Furthermore, the administrators also reported the conflict of learning styles between East Asian learners and that of learners from other areas. As administrator 2 mentioned:

> Some East Asian learners complained about their verbal Middle Eastern classmates for talking too much the class is going nowhere because these students won't shut up.

East Asian learners' sociocultural heritage. Different from learning

habits, which are more observable, learners' sociocultural backgrounds are broader and less visible. Sociocultural backgrounds however, impact learners in multiple areas, including their way of behavior and their communication skills. Particularly for East Asian learners, they come into the ECAP classroom with their own cultural and social traditions. In this section, I will summarize the administrators' perceptions on East Asian learners' communication styles and their sense of teacher-student distance that jumps out in this research.

In interviews ECAP administrators portrayed East Asian learners as having different ways of communication. According to their understanding, East Asian learners were more comfortable communicating with classmates than with teachers. For example, administrator 2 shared his teaching experience in Japan:

> Japanese learners would never ask a teacher questions even if they did not understand what the teacher was talking about. Instead, they usually turned to their Japanese classmates for help.

He believed that when East Asian learners came into the demographically diverse ECAP classroom with American teachers and foreign classmates, especially with those who were used to talking, their language confidence decreased. The decease of their language confidence caused their less frequent talk than normal.

Beyond the classroom, the administrator interviewees stated a belief that East Asian learners were not good at communicating with people in positions of authority, such as their teachers. All administrators mentioned that they had

encountered some East Asian learners who had communication issues with their teachers. A common issue several administrators referred to was East Asian learners' misunderstanding of their teachers. Some learners believed that their teachers did not like them because of various indications. In these cases, they tended to avoid direct communication with their teachers and requested the administrators to switch them to another class, or to talk to their teachers without releasing their names. The administrators attributed this request to learners' "fear of being exposed to their teachers due to learners' concern that their personal relation with teachers would affect their final grades".

Another cultural feature amongst East Asian learners that attracted the administrators' attention was their understanding of the distance in interpersonal communication. Administrator 2 shared his experience: once he established close connection with East Asian learners, they viewed him as a personal friend rather than a professional connection. Once a Korean learner he had helped called him from a supermarket at night because that student had purchased too many groceries and requested the administrator to pick him up and send him home.

A third sociocultural habit ECAP administrators believed to exist among their East Asian students was the tendency not to openly express dissatisfaction or denial about something. They were also believed to be reluctant to challenge other classmates. Administrator 4 illustrated this belief

with his experience with East Asian learners:

> Once I took a group of Chinese learners to dine out in a Chinese
> restaurant. I chose food that was on the regular menu. I chose
> those dishes that I thought my Chinese friends really enjoyed and
> ordered food on the phone before we arrived. When I ordered, I
> even said like 'hold on', and I asked their opinion in Chinese, like
> 'What do you want to eat? Are these dishes ok?' And everyone
> said 'That's fine'. At the dinner table they said the food tasted
> really good. But when I got the evaluation, it was the lowest
> evaluated event for the entire week.

Despite of his shock of the evaluation result at the first glance, he came to

realize that it was a manifestation of Chinese people's "saving face" tradition.

They tended not to express their criticism directly in order to avoid

embarrassing others.

Administrative support to East Asian learners at ECAP. According

to their understanding of East Asian learners' learning styles and their

sociocultural backgrounds, ECAP administrators provided them assistance in

several aspects. Firstly, the administrators attempted to clarify immigration

policies and program policies. To achieve this goal, ECAP prepared

orientation at the beginning of every session. One administrator presented all

policies that learners would need to know during their study at ECAP,

including immigration policies, learning expectations, assessment standards,

and discipline action against plagiarism. Secondly, administrators claimed to

encourage all types of communication, such as communication among learners,

between teachers and learners, as well as communication between learners and

administrators. For communication among learners, the program promoted a

"MOVE" philosophy in all classrooms and all activities. Every class involved group discussion and pair work, which required learners to move around classroom and talk with other learners. ECAP also stated to encourage advanced level learners to do group projects in collaboration with the university, such as survey on campus. These projects required the whole group to work together to get the credits.

Outside of the classroom, ECAP administrators planned a series of activities to facilitate English practicing and communication. There were two types of activities: the regular language activities and the seasonal activities. Weekly regular activities included Conversation Club and Reading Theatre. In addition to these regular ones, ECAP also organized some activities for a certain season, such as Thanksgiving Dinner, Valentines' Day Brownie Decorating Contest and trips within the state. Administrators addressed their expectation that learners could take these activities to practice English and connect to their classmates.

For communication between teachers and learners, one administrator claimed as the medium of communication issues. He explained that teachers and learners who had communication issues could go to him for solution. When he received a complaint case, he first collected information, and then spread the information to the teacher and learner for understanding. He mentioned that some East Asian learners requested not to release their

identities to their teachers. In these cases, the administrator affirmed his willingness to respect their requests and address their concerns to the teacher in general for improvement.

For the administrator-learner communication, all administrators in this program stated that they opened their doors to hear and solve learners' issues. Additionally, administrators also met with learners in various activities to understand their learning experience at ECAP. For special programs, administrators met with learners three times per session to collect their response about classes and activities. Based on learners' response, the administrators tailored their curriculum and activities to more effectively meet learners' needs. Learners in regular programs could also meet with administrators in various activities to give feedback of their classes and teachers. However, there was no regular meeting scheduled for feedback. ECAP lesson plans were more stable and less based on feedback from the learners.

Teachers' interviews. Different from program administrators, who supervise ECAP operation and learner performance from an administrative perspective, ECAP teachers work with East Asian learners academically on a daily basis. They know individual learners' academic performance, and provide immediate and direct help accordingly. ECAP teachers connect the program philosophy with classroom teaching and learning. Thus, their

perspective is an essential part to the understanding of this program.

In this section of my project I interviewed four teachers. Two teach required classes– one, advanced level Reading and Writing, and the other Listening and Speaking. The other two are elective class teachers; one taught a course called Business Case Study, and the other taught English for Engineering & Electronic. A common factor between these teachers was the inclusion of East Asian students in their classes.

Topics of inquiry during these interviews included teachers' personal backgrounds, past experiences working with East Asian learners, classroom activities are designed to realize specific teaching objectives, and how teachers interact with learners to facilitate their learning in classroom.

Teachers' education backgrounds and work experience. All four teachers held Masters Degrees in teaching English as a second language, second language acquisition or linguistics, all of them had teaching experience as well. Among them, two have taught English in Asian countries; for the other two, ECAP was their first experience working with East Asian learners.

Teachers' understanding of East Asian learners. In this section I will summarize teachers' understanding of East Asian learners from two aspects: East Asian learners' learning style and their sociocultural heritage that they bring to ECAP classroom.

Perception of East Asian learners' learning style. The teachers

believed that East Asian learners' educational experiences in their home

countries had developed in them a set of learning methods that suited their

home country teaching models, although these habits were not generalizable to

every individual learner.

Firstly, most East Asian learners were recognized as serious about their

learning tasks. They attended classes, listened to the teacher in class, and

completed their homework. Beside that, they had comparative strength in

grammar, reading and writing, but lack oral proficiency. In continuation, East

Asian learners preferred concrete learning tasks and specific answers. Teacher

2 shared his teaching experience in Asia, where teachers taught and drilled

students with specific answers. Thus learners were good at taking tests and

answering "right and wrong" question. When given more abstract or global

questions, they felt confused and hard to respond. To follow this teaching

style, teachers pointed out that East Asian learners gave much attention to

correctness. One illustration was the use of electronic dictionaries. In the

ECAP classroom, teachers did not allow learners to use an electronic

dictionary because they wanted the learners to talk in class. If the learners did

not understand the lecture or their learning materials, they were encouraged to

ask the teacher rather than turn to dictionary. The teacher explained it to him/

her in simple English. In this process, the student delivered and received

information in English. From the teachers' perspective, electronic dictionaries

were barriers between teacher and learner. Teacher 1 said that he directly informed his students of his disliking for electronic dictionaries. Teacher 2 claimed to collect them at the beginning of every class and gives them back to learners after class. Teacher 1 also referred to a "constant battle" with students' tendency to rely on dictionaries.

Teachers' perception of East Asian learners' sociocultural heritage. Besides different learning methods, ECAP teachers also recognized some sociocultural traditions that East Asian learners brought with them to the ECAP classroom. First, similar to the administrators' accounts, ECAP teachers understood East Asian learners as group-oriented and communication-averse. Specifically, they had a strong tendency to associate with people from their own countries. One teacher mentioned that Chinese and Japanese learners tended to stick together and not to work with classmates from other countries. All teachers echoed that this phenomenon was especially typical in the lower level classes.

Furthermore, East Asian learners were portrayed as having a different way of communication style. Teacher 1 summarized Japanese people's communication style as a "single round model". As he explained:

> Let's say, for example, if I wanted to go to Tokyo where I live, I would ask Japanese: 'is there a bus to go to Tokyo?' They answer, 'Yes, there is'. But they wouldn't tell me that there is a train that is faster and cheaper. They won't give me additional information. They answer the question and that's it. Or if you are Japanese, because you are homogeneous, living in the island, you are expected to understand what to do, not so much to ask questions.

We are very curious in our culture and we ask questions. In Japan, they just assume or respond; they don't ask so many questions or add additional information.

This single round communication was considered to be the normal way of exchanging information in Japanese culture, however, diametrically different from the American way of communication. "American people communicate in a ping-pong style, in which they talk in more than one round to give additional information. We are curious and ask questions." Teacher 1 said. Thus, from the perspective of American culture, Japanese learners are believed to lack willingness or skills of communication. (As a side note, another teacher stated that interactions with Taiwanese students revealed a style of communication similar to that of usual Japanese students.) Regarding the understanding of different communication styles, a cultural-historical approach assumes that "individual learning practice must be understood in cultural and historical context" (Gutiérrez & Rogoff, 2003, p. 22). According to Gutiérrez & Rogoff, individuals have their own "linguistic and cultural-historical repertoires" stemming from their cultural practices, thus it is more useful to consider learner differences in the context of personal cultural backgrounds and histories of engaging in cultural practices (2003, p. 22).

In view of the ping-pong communication style, it could exert positive impact to learning in the sense that it encouraged more talk and exchange in classroom. However, it is also potentially problematic: some learners frankly expressed their loss of interest in some activities when the teacher gave them

questions not intellectually challenging and praise them for answering them correctly. Three learners expressed their languished interest in teachers' praises.

Teacher facilitation.   ECAP teachers claimed to provide teaching facilitation regarding their cultural backgrounds and individual differences.

Sociocultural tradition-based facilitation.   Combining their understanding of East Asian students' learning style and their sociocultural backgrounds with the ECAP teaching philosophy, teachers tended to stimulate more communication and interaction when working with these students. Classroom communication, as teachers emphasized, should carry out in English. For example, teacher 4 tried to have learners explain a certain grammar point in English. Other frequent activities to encourage communication included group work, pair work, and jigsaw (as a sidenote, Jigsaw is a multiple-circle group discussion model. Learners are firstly assigned to groups to discuss. After the first circle of discussion is finished, they are re-assigned to a new group to present).

Another characteristic of East Asian learners, as teachers and administrators reported, was that they tended to stick together with learners from the same country. To mix them with learners from other countries, two teachers emphasized to establish conversation groups rather than allowing students to group themselves. The teachers recognized the positive impact of this strategy– they believed that most East Asian learners gradually opened up

57

and adapt to the multicultural classroom atmosphere.

Individuality-based facilitation. In this section, I want to summarize how ECAP teachers facilitate individual East Asian students' English learning. To start our discussion on individuality-based facilitation, I would like to explain "individuality" in this context. Every learner is a unique individual, yet is in constant interaction with the environment. Thus it is not realistic to distinguish among sociocultural influence, group feature and individuality. Nor do I attempt to do that. For the purposes of this research I take individuality to mean a learner's background that would influence his/her learning, which is a combination of the student's background, his/her learning objectives and his/her personality.

All ECAP teachers addressed their willingness to encourage cross-cultural communication with East Asian learners based on their understanding of East Asian cultures. However, they also credited the significance of noticing and respecting individual differences in communication. As teacher 3 who had worked in China and Japan pointed out, any broad understanding of East Asian learners was a general concept, and not universally applicable. To further supplement to this point, he shared a story about a Japanese learner's resistance in his class. That Japanese learner refused to work with his classmates from other countries. When that learner was assigned to work with them, he refused to commit to any conversation or

participation. The teacher came to him and asked: "you have to do something, who are you willing to work with?" He pointed at these Japanese students in that classroom. The teacher finally allowed him to stay in a group with other Japanese people so that he would feel comfortable enough to talk. The teacher explained that he made this decision because "I don't know what [the reason for his silence is. Maybe he had a conflict with one of the other students. So I don't want to push him too hard."

ECAP's assessment methods illustrated another effort made to give learners individual attention. During my study, the two largest learner groups at ECAP were East Asian learners and Middle Eastern learners. These two groups made up more than ninety percent of the total student population. To balance students' academic strengths and weaknesses, teachers assessed learners on all four language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) regardless of the specific subject that class focused. Teacher 4 stressed his effort in this aspect: "I try to balance the different skills so that everybody has the opportunity to get credit for what they can do". This assessment method not only motivated four-skill development but also recognized the efforts of every individual student, who had different areas of excellence in their language learning. At the same time, teachers also combined subjective with objective questions in tests. Despite the fact that subjective questions were hard for all the learners as well as for the teachers, they were believed as good

exercises for learners' thinking skills and preparation for their college study.

To effectively manage classroom teaching, teachers also attempted to motivate learners based on their knowledge of learners' individual English proficiency level. Teacher 3 stated that he gave learners challenging but achievable learning tasks to motivate them:

> (I) put them in situations that make them uncomfortable- not very uncomfortable, but a little challenging. If you let them stay in the comfortable group, they will never get out of that. So you will need to get them out of that group and try things they are not quite used to do. They may refuse at first but eventually they will get there.

Autonomy-based facilitation. As stressed at the beginning of this study, all East Asian learners at ECAP had their respective academic goals or professional pursuits when coming to this program. Based on this fact, ECAP teachers intended to give learners more autonomy in the classroom than they might give to younger students.

Several teachers claimed that the first step to give learners autonomy was to make them feel comfortable to talk. One teacher emphasized "creating open and positive environment in classroom". Besides, teachers also constantly negotiated with learners on the nature of classroom activities and assessments. They removed those learning activities in which students did not have much interest. Teachers arranged and adjusted their assessment ratio based on their conversation with learners as well. One example was a listening quiz in Listening & Speaking class. The listening material was *Jacgueline*

60

Novogratz: Inspiring a Life of Immersion, a 20 minute audio lecture on

solving global conflict and realizing cultural immersion. Teacher 4 asked

learners to take notes while listening and gave them the quiz paper after

playing the video. It turned out that the quiz questions were too detailed and

most learners did not catch the information. After negotiation, the teacher

finally decided not to take the quiz grade into the final assessment. This sort of

constant communication gives students opportunities to express their own

ideas and exercise autonomy as learners.

Learners' interviews. This section summarized East Asian learners'

response toward the ECAP administration and teaching methods. Learners

were the very core of the ECAP program and all endeavours that ECAP

administrators and teachers have made aimed to help learners achieve

effective learning. In this study I interviewed four groups of East Asian

learners at advanced level classes, including Chinese, Taiwanese, a Korean

and Japanese. For learner interviews, I was interested in identifying the

similarities and differences between learners' previous educational experiences

in their home schools and their experiences in ECAP classrooms, whether they

had difficulties in switching to ECAP's educational approach, and how this

program helped them improve English effectively. I also sought to understand

whether learners agree that ECAP considered their personal backgrounds and

expectations when attempting to improve their language acquisition. Finally, I

inquired after how much autonomy learners believed themselves to have

acquired through this program, and whether are they satisfied with the learning

results.

    Learners' perception of their learning needs and habits. Most East

Asian learners at ECAP intended to improve English and to get their

certificates for their further study; some others just intended to improve their

English; still others also expected to experience American culture. For learners

who planned to go to American universities, certificate was their primary goal,

and then language proficiency; for learners who had already been universities

students, they focused more on improving their English proficiency; while for

learners who expected an American life experience, making new friends and

having social practice were of most interest to them.

    There were certain learning habits that East Asian students considered to

be universal among them. Most learner participants expressed preference to

learn things with standard answers. For example, learner 3 learner admitted his

frustration in writing class since there were no single standards for good

writing:

> Teachers' grading standards are different. A friend of mine who is
> also studying at ECAP She asked her friend to help her revise her
> writing and then turned in. Do you know how much did she get?
> Only 40 out of 100. The teacher said that her expression was too
> simple and the vocabulary was too limited. We need a clear and
> universal grading standard.

Those learners asked to be given specific objectives with rubric standards to

define their performance. Similar to the ECAP teachers and administrators' views, most learner participants also considered themselves as better at grammar and writing than speaking. However, some of them also expressed the struggle in grammar and writing, as learner 7 learner said: "I took grammar as my elective class because I am not good at that. I am not a typical Korean student". Learner 6 stated his difficulty in writing a reading summary. He said although he could read and get the general idea from the reading material, it was difficult for him to catch the focus and dig deep into the theme. Thus, when he wrote down a summary, he usually missed the critical points. The interviews revealed learners' individual differences based on their learning objectives and individuality.

In addition, all East Asian learners recognized the switch of teaching and learning styles from their own countries to the ECAP classroom. Learners from all four subgroups introduced their learning experience in their home countries, which they perceived as more teacher-centered and lecture-styled pedagogy. Teachers were the knowledge providers, while learners, on the contrary, were the receivers. Whereas here at ECAP, learners were expected to speak more, interact with teachers, and contribute to classroom learning by offering their personal opinions. Learner 3 described the difference: "In Taiwan, my teacher just taught, taught and taught. We were given a lot of written exercises to do. While here we are expected to talk more in class.

Teachers ask our opinions in class." The change of teaching style required East Asian learners to change their learning styles in class accordingly.

Learners' response to program administration. Concerning administrative support, one interesting finding is that East Asian learners claimed more need with regards to their personal lives, such as residence, than with academic study, than their academic study. To this end, ECAP provided information for homestay and dorm room. Both the administrators and learners themselves mentioned some difficulties they had in communicating with their homestay families. Different from administrators who attributed conflicts to miscommunication alone, learners ascribed it to insufficient information from ECAP. As learner 2 summarized his knowledge of homestay:

> The residential information ECAP provides is dorm or homestay.
> The dorm is pretty expensive – 1800 dollars a month – plus meal
> plan, 200 dollars– that is $2000. Many homestay families are
> very far away from our campus. Some families near the campus
> do not have very good housing conditions.

Some learners had moved out of their dorms or the homestay families after getting familiar with the new environment.

In view of administration, several participants expressed an expectation for better administrative support on institutional information. ECAP administrators explained that the program attempted to provide effective administrative support to learners. Some of their efforts included assigning one administrator to register classes on behalf of students and another administrator to direct students to the right office in the university when they

needed more information. Students recognized these efforts the administrators had made. However, they still expressed the need for more support in institutional information. Learner 3 remembered his frustrating experience seeking information support at the university: when he first came to the program, he needed to finish some paper work with the university, and then went to the ECAP office for help. He was directed by an administrator for more information. Due to his limited English proficiency and lack of institutional knowledge, he was misunderstood by university administrator, and therefore, directed to a wrong office. And then he went back and forth for much longer time than he actually needed to solve his problem. Learners hoped for ECAP to provide them more administrative support on paperwork and institutional information service rather than only academic facilitation, which was especially critical for new learners.

Another interesting phenomenon was that some learners felt reluctant to communicate with the program about their concerns about the program since they didn't feel their complaints really had any impact. Two student participants mentioned their dissatisfaction with their teachers for various reasons. However, when asked whether they had talked to the program administrators about their concerns, both of them denied it, for the belief that their opinions would not affect the teachers' performance or change classroom teaching. Learner 6 told me his understanding of learner complaints: "if the

teacher changes, the whole lesson plan and class will need to adjust. I do not

see the possibility of doing this".

Learners' response to teachers. Besides response to program

administration, learners also mentioned their teachers in the interviews. In this

section I will brief their perceptions to teaching and teachers' facilitation in

classroom.

Perception of being communicative in classroom. Concerning

classroom teaching, one interesting finding is the difference of perceptions of

communication between teachers and learners. As described before, teachers

believed that, in general, East Asian learners were passive in communication.

However, among the seven East Asian learners I interviewed, five expressed

their appreciation of the open and friendly communication style in the

classroom. Learner 6 stressed that friendly remarks from a teacher, such as "I

love this class", gave her strong motivation and shorten the distance between

her and the teacher. This respondent had looked serious all through the

interview, but he beamed as recounted this episode. He also perceived himself

an active communicator in class, saying that she was willing to participate in

class discussion, and would raise hand to get permission when he wanted to

talk in class. Learner 2 who was planning on an undergraduate course of study

at the university told me that in order to improve his English to be admitted by

the university. He often went to sit at ECAP office and talk to teachers during

his first semester. Two other learners expressed an interest in spending time

with new friends: "I like to hang out with students from other countries

because we can talk and improve our English". Learner 6 expressed his liking

for ECAP trips for the opportunities of communication:

> Last session we went to Tucson and this session we went to Grand
> Canyon. I can make new friends and know new people at different
> places. It's fun.

Learner 7 echoed this positive attitude toward extracurricular

communication-oriented activities.

> I like the extracurricular activities. There are a lot of these
> activities, like going to Grand Canyon, going to Sedona,
> watching basketball games, visiting museums and Sparky's Den,
> watching the World Cup and football. In these activities we can
> learn American culture. They also make me feel comfortable,
> because we meet with our classmates frequently, and also meet
> with foreigners, American people and students from other
> countries.

Learners' responses proved that most East Asian learners in this program were

in fact communication-oriented.

Admittedly, there were individual differences in East Asian learners'

attitudes toward communication. Some East Asian learners were more willing

to communicate with their classmates as well as with American people than

others, as summarized above. Some East Asian learners, on the other hand,

were selectively communicative. For instance, learner 4 talked more with the

teachers than with the classmates. Learner 3 and 4 were close friends but

loosely connected to other classmates, which they attributed to a lack of

shared experience and interests. They both were talkative with close friends,

but when they met with strangers, their communication skills shut down.

> To talk to strange people I need to start the conversation, which is really not my strength. I am never a talkative person. I remember when I was young, once I got lost outside, then I preferred to call back home rather than to ask a passer-by.

Learner 5 stated that many students studying at this program from her country had no confidence on their English proficiency, and thus they tended not to speak if not necessary. More than once during interviews, learners made statements like "my English is not good" or "my English is bad".

Based on the summary, I believe that most ECAP East Asian learners were communicative. However, they had a different concept of "being communicative" than ECAP teachers. I did not see a "regular" or "typical" communication pattern among them. There were individual differences in their attitudes toward communication, particularly in how they talked to their teachers and classmates. It was also recognizable that some of them were more communicative than others.

Perceptions of classroom autonomy.   During the interview, all East Asian learners unanimously affirmed a positive attitude toward autonomy in English learning process. They affirmed that constant communication with teachers made them feel more involved in learning. The first approach they mentioned to gain autonomy was through negotiation of the lesson plan with their teachers. All learner interviewees supported this effort, as learner 7 said:

> The teachers do not teach everything in the textbook. They would ask us what we want to learn and then include these topics in our lesson plan. And the topics in these textbooks are really interesting,

like 'gifted child'. They also removed bad activities.

The second approach of giving learners autonomy was through hands-on practice. Learner 3 told me that he preferred these classes and activities in which their voices were heard and to which their efforts made a contribution. Another example was a Chinese learner who took Community Service as his elective class:

> I think this class is interesting. We go to the community to really help people. My work has value. Comparatively, some elective classes I took before were boring. Like the Pronunciation, the teacher told us the standard pronunciation, and then he asked us to practice in pair. Neither of us could pronounce perfectly, I can't see the point of practicing in pairs. As neither of us could pronounce perfectly, I can't see the point of practicing in pairs.

A third way of giving learners autonomy was group work. During group work ECAP teachers had learners express their own opinions or participated in designing study plans based on the text they learned. At this time, the teacher only paced the room to give instructions or assistance. High degree of autonomy was also given to learners during presentations: learners did not only have the right to design their presentations and present their ideas, they could also choose the topics they wanted to research and share with the class.

The classes without much autonomy were considered by learners as amotivating. Several learners showed their lack of interest in some elective classes because, in these classes, they did not perceive opportunities for real participation in activities. Teachers gave them tasks that they already knew answers, and their participation had no real originality. The sense of lack of

participation resulted in amotivation.

Class Observation Findings

In this study, observation was conducted on four classes in all. In this section I will articulate classroom interactions from several aspects: East Asian learners' learning habits I observed in classroom; learner individual differences; as well as ECAP teachers' teaching orientations and how they facilitate learning process in classroom.

Adult East Asian learners' learning habits. While observing classes I saw some general trends of learning styles among East Asian learners. First, some East Asian learners were accustomed to taking notes from and for conversation. They put down substantial writing notes for presentations or in group discussions. Four out of seven East Asian learners at advanced 2 class prepared notes for their presentations every time. When they presented, they relied heavily on notes. Note-taking was also witnessed during group discussions and pair discussions. A second learning characteristics shared by many East Asian learners was that they needed adequate preparation before offering their opinions in class discussion. Consistent with interviews, I did see some East Asian learners actively participated in discussion, but before offing their opinions, they needed time to order their thought and prepare for their talk. Learner 5 told me in the interview that she would make sure that all grammatical points were correct in her speech before sharing her ideas with

the class. And also, some East Asian learners tended to offer mature ideas than to ask questions. A third characteristic of their learning style was that they did not like to challenge other classmates. For instance, in one elective class the teacher asked learners to discuss and make decisions in groups. In one group a female Taiwanese learner disagreed with her group leader, and then she offered her opinion. When the leader insisted and argued with her, she replied "ok" without further argument. In another group where a male Japanese learner was the leader, he presented his opinion and then invited other thoughts; then a Middle Eastern learner showed disagreement. They argued on their different views for a while. The Middle Eastern learner spoke in a faster speed, and the Japanese learner could not follow the flow of the speech. At last, he accepted the Middle Eastern student's opinion and withdrew from the debate.

Another interesting finding, applied to all learners at ECAP, was that they had more ideas to offer to topics that connected to their sociocultural experience. When the topics were relevant to their background knowledge, learners tended to contribute more to the conversation. One good illustration was Valentine's Day listening exercise. On that day's Listening & Speaking class the teacher asked the class about the origin of Valentine's Day. No one knew the answer, some made a guess, and more of them merely admitted their ignorance of the topic. Due to the lack of background information, the

71

conversation could not carry on. Then learner 1 said the origin of Valentine's

Day was in China and shared the origin of Chinese Lovers' Day. At that point,

not only the Chinese learners, but also learners from other East Asian

countries who were familiar with that story, excitedly joined in the

conversation. This example demonstrated that classroom discussion topics

should be selected carefully. Those topics that connected to learners'

accumulated experience are more likely to stimulate conversation, vice versa.

      Individuality-based facilitation.   Although East Asian learners at

ECAP shared some common learning habits, my observation showed that their

learning styles varied among themselves. In the interviews most ECAP

administrators and teachers mentioned that East Asian learners tended to stick

with students from their own countries, however, in the observation I saw

several counterexamples. One good illustration was a Japanese male learner.

Everyday he came in classroom and sat alone in front or at the back of the

classroom. I seldom saw him sitting with another learner or chatting with

others during breaks. He did not actively interact with other students in class

either. Most of the time, he was quiet in group discussions, however,

performed more comfortable in talking to teachers and ask them questions. In

light of individual difference, teachers always walked around class and went to

every learner to know their questions and concerns, and provide facilitation

based on the knowledge of each learner's individual case.

Another positive effort ECAP teachers made to include East Asian learners in class was to initiate conversation with them. Everyday when the teachers came into classroom, they greeted learners with a short conversation. It could be a general talk with the whole class or a one-to-one communication. I found that most East Asian learners did not actively start a conversation with their teachers; but when they were greeted, they responded positively. The same phenomenon was seen in class discussion: some learners did not volunteer to answer questions, but when they were called, they gave the correct answers. By initiating conversation with East Asian learners, ECAP teachers included them in class talk.

One other effort the teachers made was to gain the attention of each learner in class. If a learner was distracted, the teacher would call his/her name in order to regain his/her attention. For example, once a student whom I gave a name Jee lost attention in an elective class, the teacher said to him: "Jee, you are not paying attention. You are not the only one but I just noticed you". Learner 6 asserted his appreciation of ECAP classes because "we can not sleep, we need to talk in class. So I learn more here than in Japan".

Real life-oriented facilitation. One learning orientation shared among ECAP East Asian learners was that the learners had more interest in learning materials and tasks that connected to their own life experience. One example was the News Report activity in Listening & Speaking class. This

activity required every learner to collect a piece of news and share it with the class. In one day's news report activity, a learner brought a piece of news about Craigslist cyber scam. He reported that a Craigslist buyer was killed by a dealer for his money in their meeting. This piece of information triggered heated discussion in class. The teacher and some learners shared their experience shopping on Craigslist. ECAP teachers related the teaching content to learner's daily life so that they could immediately use what they learnt in class. As the Craigslist news briefed above, after the news report, the teacher asked the class how to avoid potential risks and dangers when they used this kind of web-sites. The real life-oriented exercise with immediate application gained popularity in classroom and drove further conversation.

Connected to real life experience, topics in relation to learners' personal experience also stimulated their interest in English learning. Learner 7 confirmed his positive attitude toward real life-related topics in the interview for the opportunity of talking with purpose and acquisition of immediately applicable knowledge from the discussion, as he told me: "I like news report. It is one of my favorite class activities. These topics are interesting and helpful. Some of them also happened in our lves."

Consistent with learners' affirmation, teachers also attempted to take class opportunities to deliver social and cultural knowledge that can be applied in their later study or personal life in the States. For example, one day learner

5 Ella (a pseudonym) told the teacher that she did not bring her homework to class. The teacher (whom I named as Will) asked her the reason and then told the class in full volume: "your college professors would not be happy to know that you cannot hand in your assignments on time". In continuation, Will turned to talk to me while he was collecting the assignments:

> "Ximin, what would your professors say if you cannot hand in your assignment on time?"
> "I don't often turn in assignments late."
> "You don't 'often'?"
> "Well, yes. And if I can not turn them in on time, they would smile to me."
> "So what does that smile mean?"
> "I need to interpret it myself." Will and I laughed.
> "But seriously, will that affect your grade?"
> "Come on, Will, let's not talk about this". I thought Ella might feel uncomfortable and tried to finish the conversation, but Will would not let me go.
> "No, this is serious. Let's talk about that, what would your professors do? Are they gonna deduct your grade?"
> "So far I am doing ok, but yes, you are right, that's gonna affect my grade and I would not recommend any delay of turning in the assignments."

This conversation carried on in a casual and jocular way. However, the class was not laughing. All learners caught the serious information and implication. The teacher took this chance to teach other learners a university policy: punctuality and self-motivation is critical, which is also the policy at work places. The type of real life-oriented teaching is important since it is directly connected to and can be immediately applied in learners' real life.

Autonomy-oriented facilitation. In line with the ECAP "communication" philosophy, every teacher organized various activities to

75

facilitate communication in class, the most prevalent ones among them were group discussions and paired work, to which learners gave positively responses. In group work and pair work teachers gave learners more opportunities to organize the discussions and express their ideas. To further encourage conversation among learners from different cultures, teachers used various skills to group and pair students: some teachers asked students to call numbers, and then grouped them according to their call number; others grouped students according to his/her knowledge of students' level and capabilities; a third grouping approach was to arrange students according to their seats. Careful grouping gave learners opportunities to work with different classmates help realize a good mix in classroom.

In addition to grouping, ECAP teachers also provided timely support in group discussions. In all four classes I observed, teachers walked around the classroom to help learners during group or pair discussions. Teacher 3, who was very tall, always kneeled down when he came to a table to join the conversation. He did not comment on learners' opinions or skills they used. Rather, he explained the instructions and directions of that activity. For instance, he would stress who the leader of a group was; how to negotiate with group members to reach agreement; and which points they should take into consideration in decision-making.

In continuation, teachers intended to give learners adequate time to talk

and present in class, including presentation, class discussion, group work and pair work, just list a few.

It should also be recognized that teachers also allowed learners to pick topics they had interest in. For example, the Listening & Speaking teacher asked every student to prepare a presentation on American culture for the Mid-term test. East Asian learners presented a wide range of topics based on their own knowledge and interests: some talked about American pop culture, such as movies and the NBA; some presented American culture in relation to East Asian countries, like the American food in Japan; still others focused on the development of their own countries' culture in the U.S, like the Teahouse in Phoenix. Learners gained a high degree of autonomy in choosing their presentation topics and organizing their presentations according to their personal preference. The teacher followed up with some questions based on the presentation to help students improve their language and advance their culture knowledge.

Still one more skill ECAP teachers gave learners autonomy was through including them in classroom decision-making. Teachers discussed classroom activities, assessment methods, and teaching progress with learners. Learners responded positively in these conversations. Learner 3 stated that his appreciation of ECAP classes because the teachers valued their response to class activities.

Activity Observation Findings

One feature of ECAP program design was that it organized plenty of extracurricular activities that facilitated English learning and cultural understanding. ECAP activities can be divided into two categories: weekly regular activities and seasonal activities. Weekly regular activities included Reading Theatre and Conversation Club. Both activities were designed to give learners more opportunities to practice English. Seasonal activities varied with time, such as movie and ice cream nights, Thanksgiving Dinner, Spring Picnic, Valentine's Day Brownie Decorating Contest, as well as some in-state trips. I observed two events during this session for my study, Reading Theatre and the Valentine's Day Brownie Decorating Contest.

Reading Theatre was held at the ECAP study commons every Thursday. I observed this event twice. About 40 learners attended every time. Cookies and drinks were provided. At the beginning a program staff announced the schedule for that day and some upcoming activities. He showed excitement about these events by saying, "Yeah, let's do it," "Is it fun?" "Are you coming?" A movie was played as the material of the reading theatre. All movies ECAP picked were classic American movies, including *Rain Man, Titanic, The Thirty-Nine Steps, Pirates of the Caribbean*, etc.

The movie for the session I studied was *The Sound of Music*. Every week the reading theatre teacher went through part of it. The movie was

played in very short episodes, lasting for several minutes. Before watching the movie, the teacher explained new words involved, how the story developed in that episode, and had students read the script. At last learners watched that episode. More than half of the attendees were East Asian learners. When the teacher asked them to read the script, all of them voluntarily participated in reading. In one day's reading theatre, the Captain sang the song *Edelweiss*, and many East Asian learners sang with the movie. After that episode, three ECAP teachers came to the front to teach the students that song. Most East Asian learners joined them.

The other activity I observed was the Valentine's Day Brownie Decorating Contest. The contest was held in a big ballroom on campus. When I arrived there, the contest had already started. There were about 30 tables in the hall, all with red and pink disposable plastic tablecloths. Around 300 students attended this event. Every ECAP class had one table, with learners and their Reading & Writing and/or Listening & Speaking teachers. Teachers were there to assist with the decoration. On every table, there were 4-6 heart-shaped brownies, some small heart-shaped candies, colorful cream, chocolate chips, etc. Learners discussed the design with their teachers and classmates, and worked together. All learners were very involved in this activity. Learner 3 and 6, who were quiet in classroom, gained excitement and actively participated in the decorating task. When asked whether they liked

this event, both of them gave me an assertive "yes". I walked around the hall and saw some very interesting designs: one table made an American national flag on their brownie; one learner put her home country name on the brownie; several tables put the ECAP logo on theirs; still other groups put the word "love" in several languages on the brownie. Learner 5 put the word "love" in English, Japanese and Chinese on her brownie. She explained to me that it was the universal love from the world. At the end, each table discussed in order to choose the best decorated brownie and sent it to the front table for decorating contest. Every attendee had the right to vote for his/her favorite design. The winning table would win a free pizza lunch in the upcoming week.

Autonomy-based facilitation. ECAP extracurricular activities also considered giving learner autonomy in several ways. First, they offered activities with various themes, including food, sports, travel, movies, or conversation. Learners could participate in activities depending on their personal interest. In the meantime, learners were autonomous participants and explorers in these activities. For example, in the Brownie Decorating Contest, learners decided among themselves what design they wanted to make on the brownie, and which brownie was the best decorated for the contest. They planned and directed the activities themselves. ECAP teachers and staff only provided facilitation when needed.

Motivation. During the observation I found that East Asian learners'

motivation to participate in these activities was determined by their orientation.

Most East Asian learners who welcomed these activities were not

certificate-oriented; their primary goal at ECAP was to improve their English,

learn American culture and make friends. For example, learner 5 and 6 were

sponsored to come here for a four month period language learning program

and then went back to their home country. During their exchange study at

ECAP, they showed passion for all the activities. There was, however, another

group of East Asian learners who were primarily certificate-oriented, did not

have strong interest in these activities. They came to ECAP to improve their

English to get the language proficiency certificate for university admission.

Most of them revealed no interest in extracurricular activities. One learner

explained to me: "I don't think these activities are helpful." In conclusion,

most ECAP learners were self-directed. Their learning motivation was

determined by their goals to a large degree.

In spite of East Asian learners' self-directedness in selection of activities,

ECAP staff kept motivating learner participation in these activities. One skill

that was continually used was verbal praise. One staff member, who took

charge of activity organization kept motivating learners on all occasions, often

told students "It is fun", "it is interesting", and "let's do it". Learners liked the

active attitude staff represented in these activities.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

After briefing the findings, I will answer the research questions based on

my findings in this section. I will discuss how ECAP facilitates East Asian

learners based on their sociocultural background and individuality, and how

ECAP gives East Asian learners autonomy in their English acquisition process.

To answer the first question, based on my findings I believe that both

ECAP administrators and teachers considered East Asian learners'

sociocultural background in administrative facilitation and classroom teaching.

As introduced above, ECAP prepared cultural reading materials as well

as culture workshops for administrators and teachers to gain the general

knowledge of other societies and cultures. In addition, ECAP made positive

efforts toward resolving learners' culture-related issues, as administrator 2

claimed that they tended to create a communicative system for all forms of

learner-administrator exchanges. ECAP administrators also offered learners an

"open door policy" in order to problem solve and respond to learners'

concerns and issues. Specifically for East Asian learners, administrators were

trying to facilitate their English learning according to their cultural tradition

and social backgrounds. Two administrators mentioned that sometimes East

Asian learners experienced miscommunication with their American teachers.

In these circumstances, East Asian learners preferred an indirect way of

communication: a third party addressed the problem to their teachers without

releasing their personal information. Regarding this request, the administrator

who took charge of communication issues showed his understanding of

learners' cultural tradition and accepted this request. Learners also

corroborated that ECAP administrators demonstrated positive efforts in

solving their issues and providing administrative support.

ECAP teachers also strived to understand East Asian learners'

sociocultural background and combine it with classroom teaching. With their

educational background, work experience and teacher preparation training,

teachers gained better understanding of East Asian cultures. One effort all

teachers made was to initiate conversation with learners. These small casual

talks before classes and during breaks worked as continual icebreakers

between the teachers and the East Asian learners, and therefore, prepared them

for class discussion.

However, not all ECAP teachers had experience working with East

Asian learners, which sometimes made a difference to their understanding of their East Asian students. For instance, due to their different cultures and educational notions, teachers and learners sometimes had difficulty in understanding one another. Learner 3 addressed that issue:

> Sometimes I do not understand an idea or a concept my teacher mentioned in class, then I asked him. But it happened that after his explanation I still did not get it; then I just remembered it. I think there is a cultural gap, so no matter how he tried to explain it to me, I still did not get it.

This cultural gap was a challenge for both teachers and learners. It is found that teachers with work experience in a certain country had better understanding of that country's culture. For example, one teacher who had worked in several countries and regions in East Asia repeatedly emphasized the individual differences of East Asian learners: "I know you can not generalize it to everyone".

Due to this culture gap, administrators sometimes misread East Asian learners' cultural context. For instance, when some learners complained to communication specialist administrator that they thought their teachers did not like them or did not give them fair grades, this administrator asked the learner to go back and address the problem directly with the teacher, as American culture advocates. It is understandable that ECAP aims to adapt East Asian learners to American culture. However, it takes time for newly arrived East Asian learners to accustom to this new culture and behave accordingly. As several learners recognized in the interviews that it took much longer time to

"do the culture" than to know it. In these situations, if their request is rejected, the chance is that learners put the issue aside. The suspension of learners' problems would exert a negative impact on their learning at ECAP.

Another concern is that there was no single guideline for solving learner complaints. For the most part, complaints were acted upon at an ad hoc basis. In the meantime, administrator showed different approaches toward problem solving. As mentioned above, two program administrators mentioned that some East Asian learners requested anonymity when complaining their teachers. To answer this request, different administrators showed different attitudes. Administrator 2 chose to respect this request by generally addressing the issue with the teacher and suggesting a solution for it, while administrator 4 insisted that the learner directly go to the teacher and discuss his/her concern in person. The latter approach might lead to the delay of communication on and solving of the problem.

Regarding learners' individuality in class, ECAP did attempt to facilitate East Asian learners by taking into account their individualities. Facilitation was provided from several aspects, including program design, administrative support and classroom teaching.

Administrator 1 claimed at the beginning of his interview that ECAP was designed for the consideration of learners' diverse learning objectives. To meet individual learning objectives, ECAP designed two different programs,

the regular program and the special program. The regular program aims to

prepare international learners for American universities. The special program

is offered for some short-term learner groups with specific specializations.

Learner groups in the special program were sent by ECAP partners around the

world to learn English and their major-related courses. Their learning

objectives are set and evaluated by their sponsor institutions. To assist these

special groups to meet their learning objectives, ECAP makes connections

with relevant professionals in a wide range of fields. When I conducted this

study, a Korean architecture group was studying at ECAP. An administrator

was designated to take charge of their study and life here. Before their arrival,

the administrator had contacted the university architecture professors to match

this group with the university scholars based on their research focus. During

their study at this program, these Korean scholars met with their American

counterparts to discuss their research.

Another effort ECAP made to meet learners' individual needs in the

regular program was to offer an array of elective classes. For this study, ECAP

opened more than 40 elective classes covering a wide range of fields,

including language classes, such as Grammar and Pronunciation,

major-focused classes such as Business Case Study, English for Engineering &

Electronic, Architecture, and some practice-focused classes, such as

Community Service. Program administrators recommended learners elective

classes based on their language proficiency, majors or interests.

In the meantime, teachers also showed understanding of learners' individuality and facilitated their learning process based on their individual needs and differences. Although I found from teacher interviews that they perceived East Asian learners as having some common learning styles, they gave attention to learners' individual needs and planned classroom activities on that regards. For instance, in all four classes I observed, teachers communicated with learners individually during group discussions to provide individual assistance. In addition, teachers also considered learners' different personalities when facilitating their learning. For example, in most cases, teachers tend to push learners to move out of their comfort zone to work with classmates from other countries. However, when the elective class teacher found out that the Japanese learner would not work with other classmates, he allowed the learner to stay with other Japanese learners.

Concerning learner individuality, my research reveals that both ECAP administrators and teachers were making positive efforts to give East Asian learners autonomy, in classroom and beyond that.

In the first place, ECAP teachers had the awareness of valuing learner autonomy. They gave learners autonomy and motivated their active participation in English learning process: 1) Teachers designed lesson plans and classroom discussions, as well as assessment methods based on learners'

responses. ECAP syllabuses were dynamic. Teachers communicated with learners on topics and activities that they liked to carry out in classes, and made changes according to learners' responses. Those unwelcome topics and activities were removed from their lesson plans. 2) Teachers organized many classroom discussions that were dominated by learners. These discussions enabled learners to autonomously express their ideas and practice their English as much as possible, rather than passively listen and receive information from the teacher. Beside that, teachers also attempted to relate classroom discussions to learners' life experiences. 3) ECAP teachers kept communicating with learners in classroom for learning tasks and assignments. 4). Consistent with the university assessment system, ECAP assessment took into account classroom participation, assignments, quizzes and final exams. To make this possible, the assessment system gave teachers a certain degree of freedom to decide the specific proportion of each part in their final grade. Teachers adjusted the proportion of different parts depending on the learners' educational backgrounds and language skills. As one teacher suggested, "I want to take all skills [into account] in my assessment so that everyone gets credits for what they have achieved".

In addition to classroom teaching, ECAP also encouraged learners' autonomous participation in a variety of activities. A wide range of extracurricular activities with different themes were made available for students.

88

In the session that I studied, 24 activities were prepared, including sports events, dinners, conversation clubs, as well as some cultural events and trips. These activities were open to all ECAP learners. Similarly, ECAP also offered a variety of elective classes. Thus, learners could decide by themselves which elective classes they desired to take based on their own professional goals or personal interests. Another approach in which ECAP advocated autonomy was through initiating communication and conversations with learners on their learning experience. ECAP advocated communication with learners in both the regular program and the special program.

One concern of giving learners autonomy is the different understanding of learners' identity between the program and the learners themselves. ECAP regards its learners as students in this program. Thus the program mainly focuses on teaching and has the learners handle their personal life and sort out university policies themselves. Some instances are that program administrators were designated to learners' learning and communication issues at this program, but directed them to the university to solve their policy problem. It also gave comparatively less attention to learners' personal life. The learners, on the contrary, view themselves more as clients, expecting the program to offer all-round care for their tuition. The different understanding of learner identity cause slightly mismatch between the program preparation and learner expectation.

Chapter 6

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Hereto, I have introduced the findings and how they answer my research

questions. In this section I look for the important implications of some issues

that emerged in this study which I believe deserve our attention and give some

recommendations.

Implications

The first issue is about East Asian learners' communication and

interaction in the ECAP classrooms. East Asian cultures have similar

teacher-learner relationships, which is from that of American culture. East

Asian learners suggested that, in their home countries, teachers and students

keep a certain distance, which demonstrates the classroom hierarchal structure

in these countries. Teachers are the authority and knowledge givers and thus

have a superior position. Learners, on the other hand, are knowledge receivers

and in an inferior position. They are not expected to contribute much in the classroom. This is especially true before college. The teaching style in East Asian classrooms is more lecture-oriented than conversation-dominated. For example, in most East Asian countries, if learners want to talk in class, they are supposed to raise their hands and get permission from the teacher. Learners do not gain much autonomy in classroom.

In the ECAP classroom, however, the learning process is communicative and autonomous. Learners are expected not only to take but also to offer knowledge. This change is an opportunity for East Asian learners. Most East Asian learners welcome the communicative learning style. They are more motivated to learn and speak in ECAP classroom. At the same time, this new teaching style also brings them a challenge. Some of them are not used to talking freely in the classroom. Several learner participants expressed their awareness and recognition of the learning style at ECAP. However, due to the learning habit they developed in their home countries, they cannot adapt to it in a short time. It takes more time for East Asian learners to adapt than to understand this communication style.

In view of this difference, teachers' effort of initiating conversation showed positive effect. These casual communications eliminates the sense of distance, and therefore, helps students relax and get ready for class discussion. In addition, selection of discussion topics also shows significance. Topics that

91

are related to learners' sociocultural experience or personal interest and give learners autonomy stimulate more response.

A second issue emerged during this study is that learners raised in East Asian countries have a different understanding of "active participation" than American teachers do. A Japanese learner considered himself as "actively participating in class". What I saw in the classroom was that he did try to participate in the classroom discussion, but he seldom initiated conversation with teachers or classmates. Every time when he wanted to join in the communication in class, he raised hand to get the teacher's permission. From the perspective of teachers, this learner was still expected to further open up and be more involved in the classroom interaction.

In light of this difference, it is suggested that a certain degree of "push" helps learners adapt to the American classroom teaching and learning style. As I observed in the ECAP classroom, some East Asian learners did not actively talk in the classroom or group discussion, but when teachers called their names to include them in the conversation, they always gave the right answers. In group discussion, one teacher assigned learners different roles: one learner asked questions, one learner answered questions, another one led the discussion. This arrangement included everyone in the discussion and urged them to talk. Both teachers and learners reported that, after a period of time learning in the ECAP, East Asian learners felt more comfortable and capable

to talk in class.

In continuation, my study also revealed a bigger individual difference than cultural difference in the ECAP classroom. Although East Asian learners share cultural traditions and social knowledge, they have their respective English learning background, social identity, professional pursuits as well as personalities. East Asian learners are a diverse group. They plan their study based on individual needs and pursuits. Starting form the understanding of learners' individual differences, teachers are encouraged to work with them individually.

Besides communication style mentioned above, East Asian learners at ECAP have concerns on some practical issues: time, cost and residential information. Most East Asian learners have more concern about these practical issues than on their academic performance. Because of their individual cases, they hold different expectations toward practical concerns. The first concern was the length of program. Those learners who intended to go to American universities complained that the ECAP program was too long for them to prepare for university study; learners who came to ECAP to learn language and culture thought it was too short to improve their language skills and experience American culture. The second practical concern was cost. Some learners chose ECAP because it is less costly than similar programs in California or New York. But many East Asian learners still complained that

the cost is too high for their families to pay, particularly the cost of books. This expense was considered not worthy since a considerable proportion of the content of their books was not covered in class. The last one was residential information. It was introduced in the findings part that East Asian learners wanted to have more residential information and assistance during their stay at ECAP. These concerns are shared by adult learners who need to manage their time and plan their future.

These practical focals echo adult learning notions, which argue that adult learners are highly self-directed, their readiness to learn depends on their needs. To respond to these concerns, we still recommend more individual level communication and program options based learners' individualities.

What worth mentioning is that, to more effectively facilitate English learning, ECAP administrators and teachers place an emphasis on motivation. As being briefed in the literature synthesis, there are different ways of categorizing motivation. I classify ECAP motivation approaches as soft motivation and hard motivation, based on the motivators. Soft motivation refers to actions that aim to provide learners internal satisfaction, such as teachers' words or actions to show affirmation and appreciation. Hard motivation means motivating actions that give learners immediate external benefit, such as reducing learning tasks or giving extra credits.

Both forms of motivation are used at ECAP. The most common soft

94

motivation ECAP administrators and teachers used was verbal praise like "very good", "good job", and "I like it". Soft motivation is more influential in building learners' confidence and improving their performance in a long term. One Japanese learner told me that he loved his teacher because the teacher told them "I love this class and I love to help students". He said he was highly motivated by the teachers' words and worked harder than in Japan. However, soft motivation is not constantly binding to learners. One teacher complained: "sometimes students just do not participate". Hard motivation, on the other hand, is constantly effective to a certain group of learners. One good illustration is giving credits to certificate-oriented learners. A Chinese learner who was preparing to apply for universities here recognized those teachers who gave them high grades as good teachers. He explained, "We need to graduate, thus good scores are very important." In one Listening & Speaking class, the teacher asked learners to listen to a record and try to take notes. One Taiwanese learner asked the teacher: "Will you give us credit for taking notes?" The teacher said "no". Then that learner did not take any notes. These examples show that hard motivation is instantly effective to learners who are in dire need of a good transcript. However, it is less effective to learners who are not pursuing a certificate. And also, it is effective only in a comparatively short period. Once these learners get the certificates or transcripts they need, they lose motivation to learn. Both soft and hard motivations are forms of

external motivation.

Adult East Asian learners are motivated English learners. Their motivation is determined by their orientations and the autonomy they gain in learning activities. As stated before, ECAP adult East Asian learners at ECAP have their respective learning orientations. They are motivated to undertake learning tasks when they perceive these tasks as instrumental to fulfill their orientations. Learners withdraw from activities that reveal no facilitation to their orientations. Autonomy also impacts learners' motivation. It is found that learners are motivated by learning activities with a high degree of autonomy.

Finally, adult East Asian learners show preference to caring program administrators and teachers. Although some administrators and teachers' limited work experience with East Asian learners constraints their understanding of, and communication with ECAP East Asian students, most East Asian learners expressed their appreciation and admiration to administrators who are caring to them. "Being caring" shows more significance in successful communication and facilitations.

To sum up, to better help adult East Asian learners improve their English language, ECAP needs to better understand learners' sociocultural background, to continue providing individualized facilitation and motivation, and to give learners more autonomy. Caring program design and teaching strategy in classroom proves helpful in initiating communication and

conversation.

Recommendations

In view of my study experience, below are some recommendations for the further study of English learning experience of East Asian adult learners in the U.S.

1. A further research could focus on a subgroup of East Asian adult learners to further understand their English learning experience and needs.

2. A longitudinal study could be done to examine the effect of different forms of motivation and autonomy on learning outcomes.

Finally, this thesis study provided me with a good research experience. It improved my research skills and prepared me to be a future teacher and a young scholar in a related field.

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1993). Perceived self-efficacy in cognitive development and functioning. *Educational Psychologist,* 28(2), 117 - 148.

Chlup, D. T., & Collins T. E. (2010). Breaking the ice: Using ice-breakers and re-energizers with adult learners. *Adult Learning,* 21(3/4), 34-39.

Collier, V.P. (1995). Acquiring a second language for school. *Directions in Language and Education,* 1(4), 3-14.

Collier, V., & Thomas, W. P. (1997). Language-minority student achievement and program effectiveness. *NCBE Resource Collection Series, No. 9.*

Corbin, J., & Strauss A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory,* (3rd ed.). Log Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Covington, M. V. (1992). *Making the grade: A self-worth perspective on motivation and school reform.* New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Darkenwald, G. G., & Merriam, S. B. (1982). *Adult education: Foundations of practice.* New York, NY: Harper and Row.

Dominic R. (2010). Learning to learn. *Adults Learning*, 21(6), 19.

Deci, E. L., Vallerand, R. J., Pelletier, L. G., & Ryan, R. M. (1991). Motivation and education: The self-determination perspective. *The Educational Psychologist*,

26 (3), 325-346.

Deci, E., & Ryan R. (1985). *Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior*. New York, NY: Plenum.

Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 273-284.

Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language Teaching,* 31(3), 117-135.

Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.

Gardner, R. C. (2001). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. In Z. Dörnyei, & R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Motivation and second language acquisition*, (pp. 1-22). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Gardner, R. C., & Lambert, W. E. (1972). Attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Raleigh, NC: Newbury House.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1992). A student's contribution to second language learning: Part I, cognitive factors. *Language Teaching, 25,* 211-220.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). A student's contribution to second language learning: Part II, affective factors. *Language Teaching, 26,* 1-11.

Grow, G. O. (1991). Teaching learners to be self-directed. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(3), 125-149.

Gardner, R. C., & MacIntyre, P. D. (1993). On the measurement of affective variables in second language learning. *Language Learning, 43,* 157-194.

Gutiérrez, K. D., & Rogoff, B. (2003). Cultural ways of learning: Individual traits or repertoires of practice. *Education Researcher*, 32 (5), 19-25.

Harter, S. (1981). A new self-report scale of intrinsic versus extrinsic orientation in the classroom: motivational and informational components. *Developmental Psychology*, 17(3), 300-312.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Julkunen K. (1989). Situation and task-specific motivation in foreign language

learning. In Z. D6rnyei, & R. Schmidt (Ed.), *Motivation and second language acquisition*, 29-41. Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

Kim, K. J. (2009). Motivational challenges of adult learners in self-directed E-learning. *Journal of Interactive Learning Research,* 20(3), 317-335.

Knowles, M. (1968). Andragogy, not pedagogy. *Adult Leadership*, 16(10), 350–386.

Knowles, M. (1975). *Self-directed Learning*. Chicago, IL: Follet Publishing Company.

Knowles, M., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (1998). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (5th ed.). Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company.

Leyland, P. (2010). Making a connection. *Adults Learning*, 21(8), 30-31.

Littlewood, W. (1999). Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts. *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 71-94.

Littlewood, W. (2000). Do Asian students really want to listen and obey? *ELT Journal*, 54(1), 31-36.

Littlewood, W. (2010). Chinese and Japanese students' conceptions of the "ideal English lesson". *RELC Journal*, 41(1), 46-58.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review,* 50(4), 370-396.

Maslow, A. H. (1987). *Motivation and personality*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers.

Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New Directions for Adult & Continuing Education,* 89, 3-14.

Merriam, S. B., & Caffarella, R. S. (1999). *Learning in adulthood: A comprehensive guide (2nd Ed.)*. San Francisco, CA: Jossy-Bass.

Mesh, L. J. (2010). Collaborative language learning for professional adults. *Electronic Journal of E-learning*, 8(2), 161-172. Retrieved from: www.ejel.org.

Masahiko, M., & Ovando, C. J. (2004). Language issues in multicultural contexts. In Banks, J. A., & McGee Banks, C. A. (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education,* (2nd ed.). 567-588. San Francisco, CA: Jossy-Bass.

Mitchell, R., & Myles, F. (2004). *Second language learning theories, 2nd ed.* London: A Hodder Arnold Publication.

Noels, K. A., Pelletier, L. G., Clément, R., & Vallerand R. J. (2000). Why are you learning a second language? Motivational orientations and self-determination theory. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 50 (1), 57-85.

Clandinin, J. D., & Murphy, S. M. (2009). Relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38 (8), 598-602.

Ovando, C. J., Combs, M. C., & Collier, V. P. (2006). Language. In *Bilingual and ESL classrooms: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts,* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Ryan, R., & Deci, E. (2000). Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions. *Contemporary Educational Psychology,* 25, 54-67.

Schumann, J. H., Crowell, S. E., Jone, N. E., Lee, N., Schuchert, S. A., & Lee, A. W. (2004). *The neurobiology of learning: Perspectives from second language acquisition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Silverman, D. (2007). *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about qualitative research.* Los Angeles, CA: SAGE Publications.

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: studying how do things work*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Taylor, B., & Kroth, M. (2009). Andragogy's transition into the future: Meta-analysis of andragogy and its search for a measurable instrument. *Journal of Adult Education*, 38(1), 1-11.

Weisz, E. (1990). Energizing the classroom. *College Teaching,* 38(2), 74-76.

Williams, M., & Burden, R. (1997). *Psychology for language teachers: A social constructivist approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Zmeyov, S. I. (1998). Andragogy: Origins, developments and trends. *International Review of education*, 44(1), 103-108.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2011). *Public reports*. Retrieved from:
http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/dimView.aspx.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Below listed are the main questions that will be asked in the interview. The questions are divided into three parts targeting different interviewees.

Interview questions for administrative staff:

1. Can you introduce yourself?

2. How long have you been working in this program? What are you job responsibilities?

3. Now let's talk about ECAP. Concerning language proficiency, what is the program's expectation toward current students when they leave this program?

4. How do you set this expectation/ objective? Could you explain the rationale of teaching and learning objectives?

5. How would you design curriculum? Is it very standard or more flexible? Tell me more about your curriculum and how it works in classroom?

6. How do you choose textbooks?

7. How do you design syllabus and how does it work in classroom?

8. How do you select teachers for this program (if applicable)?

9. How do you assess teachers in this program (if applicable)?

10. Do you often meet with students and hear from them?

    If yes, how do you do that? How often you receive East Asian students?

If no, why not?

11. Can you talk about East Asian students in this program? How often do you connect to them?

12. What kind of questions and learning problems do they usually bring to you? How does this program help them overcome these challenges?

13. How do they perform in this program compared to students from other regions of the world?

Interview questions for teachers:

1. Can you introduce yourself and your teaching background?

2. Why did you choose this job in ECAP? What are your job responsibilities? And how do you like it? (follow up with description of details)

3. How long have you been teaching in ECAP? Which levels and which classes have you been teaching?

4. Have you had experience working with East Asian students in ECAP? Can you talk about your Asian students?

5. What strategies do you use to establish good rapport with Asian students at the beginning of a session? Do you have special challenges?

6. What activities do you use to warm up at the beginning of class? Why

would you choose these activities? How would East Asian students respond to these activities?

7. What activity / activities do you often use in classroom, why do you choose this activity / these activities? (follow up with interaction in teaching activities)

8. How do you interact with East Asian students, do you use some special skills?

9. Do you think Asian students need special motivation to actively participate in class activities? How do you motivate them better participate in class?

10. Concerning language background, do you find East Asian students' L1 influence their English study? How do you help them with this?

11. How do you assess students in class? What lead you to choose these assessment methods?

12. How do East Asian students do in your class? Can you tell me more about that?

Interview questions for students:

1. Can you introduce yourself (ethnic background, reason to come to the U.S)?

2. Why did you choose ECAP and how do you like it, why?

3. How effective do you think the program improve your English proficiency?

4. Have you gotten to know administrative staff in this program? (follow up with details) How do you connect to your classmates and teachers inside the classroom?

5. Do you feel the classroom learning here is different from that in your home country? What are the difference and the common places? How do you like that?

6. How do you like the curriculum? Why do you like / dislike it? Is there any system to respond you attitude toward the curriculum?

7. How do you like your textbooks? Why do you like / dislike them? Is there any system that you could express your opinions to the textbooks?

8. What class activities do you like best?   What do you like least? Can you describe these activities?

9. Do you actively participate in class? Why or why not?

10. Do you think your teachers motivate your participation in class? Describe that.

11. Do you receive feedbacks from teachers and classmates in your language class?   How would that happen and how do you like that interaction?

12. Did you or do you feel it is difficult to keep up in class?

If you did, when and how did you overcome that? What resources did ECAP offer to help you?

If you do, what are you doing to overcome the difficulties? Can you explain your experience?

13. What extracurricular activity/ activities do you like most? Tell me your experience in this kind of activity/ activities.

14. What are the assessment methods used in your class? Do you recognize them as valid?
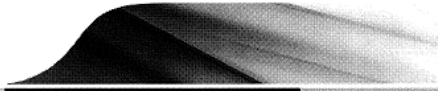
APPENDIX B

PROTECTING HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS CERTIFICATES

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **arnold danzig** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 12/12/2008

Certification Number: 145669

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that **Ximin Mi** successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course "Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 12/07/2009

Certification Number: 349203

APPENDIX C

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

To:	Arnold Danzig
	College of
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair
	Soc Beh IRB
Date:	01/07/2011
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	01/07/2011
IRB Protocol #:	1012005835
Study Title:	Language Learning Experience of Adult East Asian Students in American English and Culture
	Program: A Case Study

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.   It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Ximin Mi is a Master student at Social and Philosophical Foundations of Education program, at Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, Arizona State University. She grew up in China and then come to the United States to pursue my graduate study. This language and culture transition inspired her interest in researching in the field of second language acquisition. This research is an initial attempt in this field. She wishes to have more opportunities study and work with second language learners in the future.