

**Using Chinese in China - Challenges and Opportunities:
A Case study of Three Finnish Sojourners**

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Master's Thesis in Education

Spring Term 2016

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ABSTRACT

Despite the growing attention on interaction between language learners/sojourners and host community, there has been little research on second language (L2) using experience by adopting case study approach, by which each individual's voice is valued. Grounded in sociocultural theory (SCT), the present study explores challenges and opportunities of international sojourners when they use Chinese in China by investigating three Finnish sojourners' experiences in using Chinese. Coleman's concentric circles model is adopted to illustrate sojourners' different language choices and reasons with compatriots, international people and host community. Narratives and interview data are analyzed and discussed by applying qualitative content analysis.

This study argues contextual factors have significant influence on sojourners' language choices and their experiences of using Chinese in China. It also reveals the active play of sojourners' agency in their process of using Chinese as L2. In residence abroad context, host community as well as the relationships between sojourners and host community are suggested to be crucial social aspects of sojourners' language use and sojourners' intercultural competences appear to be essential elements as well.

Keywords: Chinese L2 learning, Chinese L2 use, residence abroad, agency, sociocultural theory

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1 INTRODUCTION

The importance and potential of China has been recognized worldwide because of its rapid economic growth and national strength as well as the improved global image. Becoming more and more integrated with the outside world since the reform and opening-up of China in 1978, increasingly number of international sojourners come to China with the aim of working or studying. According to the Annual Report on Chinese International Migration (Wang, Liu & Miao, 2015) issued by the Center for China and Globalization (CCG), the number of foreign residents in China swelled to 848, 500 in 2013, annually up near 3.9% from a decade ago. Students were among the major sources of international sojourners in China. The enrolment of international students in China was 377, 054 in 2014, with a continually increase of 110, 844 from 2004, found by the Institute for International Education (IIE).

Due to the fact that China is a big country according to its territory and population, there are differences between cities in China from varying degrees. Concerning the sojourners' language using experiences, differences in host communities' dialect, life style and the degree of internationalization may be related. Even though standard mandarin (Putonghua) is the official language in China and is taught to non-native speakers (NNS) in Chinese classes, dialects are widely used outside the classroom, which may have considerable influence on sojourners' experiences in using Chinese with the host community. For

instance, sojourners may encounter more difficulties if their interlocutors are used to speak dialect that is very different from mandarin, whilst it is may be easier for sojourners to use Chinese with locals whose dialect is closely related to mandarin.

Other than “study abroad (SA)”, Coleman (2013) perceived “residence abroad” as a more inclusive term since it comprises not only formal study, but also choices for the intercalary period. In the case of this study, the purpose of sojourners was work rather than studying Chinese, therefore “residence abroad” is applied here in order to encompass the diversity of sojourners’ experiences of using Chinese.

Recently, a number of studies have attempted to investigate sojourners’ process of learning by applying introspective approaches, such as interviews and diaries (Gao, 2010; Meier & Daniels, 2013; Aveni, 2005; Yang & Kim, 2011). Individual sojourner’s voices and experiences are valued and seen as important factors for understanding the complicated learning process in the SA context by these researchers. Sharing the same point of view, Ushioda (2009) stressed the nature of individual learner as “thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and backgrounds, a person with goals, motives and intentions” (p. 220). Consistent with their argument, SCT discusses what and how we learn is shaped by “our history of lived experiences in our communicative environment” (Hall, 2002, p. 66). Therefore, I argue it is a

rational approach to explore sojourners' language use in residence abroad context by interviewing them with a focus on language using experiences.

Sojourners' experiences in the residence abroad context have been studied from a number of perspectives. For instance, questionnaires, nominal voting technique, and semi-structured interviews (recorded) were conducted in order to explore students' social interaction during their year abroad (Meier & Daniels, 2013). Aiming at investigating the role of language attitudes and motivation in the adaption of international students in China, Yu (2010) carried out large-scale questionnaire survey in two sessions over a nine-month period. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected by Du (2013) for the purpose of examining the development of participants' Chinese fluency during their sojourn, including questionnaires, observations and informal Chinese speaking events with participants. The value of case study approach was discussed and highlighted by Kinginger (2008). She considered case study as a useful complement of outcomes-based research since it enables researchers to examine sojourners' "dynamic motivations, perceptions, and choices of activities as well as the diverse ways in which they are received within host communities" (Kinging, 2008, p. 3). Therefore, the case study approach was adopted in this research in order to obtain in-depth understanding of individual sojourner's language using experiences, from which we could also further explore the underlying interaction between their agency and context. By considering each sojourner's engagement with language use and learning, life

situation, as well as personal, this study attempts to investigate the sojourners' varied experiences in using Chinese and also the ones they have in common.

Specifically, this study addresses following questions:

1. How do contextual factors, host community as well as the relationships between sojourners and host community affect sojourners' language using choices and experiences?
2. How is sojourners' agency practiced in the language using experiences?

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Sociocultural Approach

This study is grounded in sociocultural perspective that views language learning as “the jointly constructed process of transforming socially formed knowledge and skills into individual abilities” (Hall, 2002, p. 66). It considers language learning as socially mediated process in which language learners are social agents. The main focus of SCT is the interrelation between higher mental functions (e.g., reasoning and learning) and the cultural, institutional, and historical contexts that an individual lives in (Wertsch, 1998). Viewing the relationship between an individual and the social contexts as reciprocal in nature (Vygotsky, 1978), sociocultural approach enables us to take a close look at the sojourners language use in residence abroad context from the respects of social interaction, social environment, as well as identity and agency.

It has been recommended by Firth and Wagner (1997) that learners should not be framed as one identity, that of language learner, rather, they should be viewed as human beings with multiple identities. Ushioda (2009)’s call with regard of motivation research also applies well here: she appealed to researches to be conducted with “a focus on the agency of the individual person as a thinking, feeling human being, with an identity, a personality, a unique history and background, a person with goals, motives and intentions” (p. 220). Considering sojourners with multiple identities and active agency proves a

more insightful understanding of their language using experiences in residence abroad context from various perspectives. Block (2007) shed light on the shift from the interface between language use and linguistic development to the interface between language use and identity by discussing related key publications. He differentiated the participant Alice in Kinginger (2004)'s research from other SA participants, as Alice overcame significant personal, social, and material obstacles in her French language learning process and could develop deep and meaningful relations with the host community that many SA participants failed to do. As Isabelli-García (2006) suggested, SA participants who manage to become part of the host community are more likely to develop new identities with greater intercultural sensitivity than those SA participants who do not. In addition, considering agency as the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn 2001, p. 130), Ahearn viewed culture and language are closely interwoven and both should be considered when researchers seek to understand a complex concept as agency. Hence, it is necessary and important to take culture factors into consideration when we analyze sojourners' use of Chinese in China, as Finland and China are two countries with very distinct cultural backgrounds.

As far as using foreign language in abroad context is concerned, language socialization may be relevant. As Duff (2007) illustrated, "language socialization" refers to the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership as well as

legitimacy in the group by means of social interaction. Second language socialization (SLS), with more complexity than first-language (L1) socialization (e.g. degree of access and acceptance), have much in common with SCT as Duff (2007) exemplified. The one significant feature that concerns this study is that both SLS and SCT acknowledge the key role of interlocutors in helping novices or newcomers to reach their goals and potentials by means of scaffolding or guided assistance. As Palfreyman (2011) argued, the interaction with “significant others” is a crucial element in language learning beyond the classroom. In his work, Palfreyman (2011) discussed that friends and family, rather than teachers played key roles in learners’ language learning outside the classroom from social network and social capital perspectives. Van Lier (1998) pointed out that one of the major social aspects that related to L2 learning is the relationship between learners and their interlocutors, which also manifested the complexity of SLS. Since the interlocutors (host community) may warmly embrace and support the learners, or, on the contrast, being unfriendly and even resistant to the learners. These considerable differences of the attitude of interlocutors and the relationship between learners and host community may have significant influence on sojourners’ L2 use. Furthermore, language socialization examines not only the process of language use and development, but also how this process affects sojourners’ participation in the host community and mediates their learning of other nonlinguistic matters (Duff & Kobayashi, 2010).

2.2 Language Perspective

Firth and Wagner (1997) highlighted the attribution of language as a “social phenomenon, acquired and used interactively, in a variety of contexts for myriad practical purposes” (p. 296). Linguistic anthropologists regard language as inextricably embedded in the sociocultural networks (Ahearn, 2001); a vehicle that people are continually in the process of constructing together (Ahearn, 2001); a form of social action, a cultural resource as well as a set of sociocultural practices (Schieffelin, 1990).

Different from the language learners whose purpose of residence abroad is to learn the host language, participants in this study worked in China and therefore work was the priority of their sojourn, rather than studying or practicing Chinese. Yet these participants used the Chinese language as vehicle with practical purposes in everyday situations, which is consistent with linguistic anthropologists’ point of views. At the same time, how to use the language accurately, appropriately and flexibly, namely communicative competence according to Yule (2010), is another challenge for sojourners. Keeping above-mentioned notions in mind, this study shifts the focus away from investigating sojourners’ language learning activities and instead concentrate on analyzing sojourners’ significant experiences in using Chinese in residence abroad context, the experiences with detailed information and affections.

2.3 Study Abroad & Second Language Acquisition

Carroll (1967)'s study argued that a "year abroad" experience is certainly useful in improving students' foreign language proficiency, which provided a solid background for continuous research concerning language learning in SA context. For instance, a great number of studies have shown that study in the country in which the target language is spoken benefits learners' language learning (Freed, 1995; Coleman, 1997). In the context of studying Chinese in China, Du (2013) argued studying in China benefits students' language learning in terms of fluency. In the same context, it was argued that integrative motivation of international students in China is significantly and positively correlated with sociocultural adaptation and academic adaptation (Yu, 2010).

Growing attention has been focused on the interaction between language learners/sojourners and the host community. In the SA context, better language fluency is deemed as related directly to more interaction with host community and as such leads to fewer sociocultural adjustment problems (Ward & Kennedy, 1993). Viewing the relationship between language fluency and social interaction as most likely a reciprocal one, Church (1982) indicated that the higher level of language fluency led to better interaction with the host community, which, in turn, the greater participation in the host community led to better language fluency. Consistent with Church, it was suggested that greater interaction with the host community would contribute to the better target language competence (Clément, Noels & Deneault, 2001). Based on social

capital theory, Meier and Daniels (2013) stressed the importance for students who study abroad to renegotiate identities in the social environment and to actively seek opportunities to build weak and strong ties with host community, which is beneficial for language acquisition. Coleman (1998) argued that sojourners' sociocultural and intercultural competences are essential elements of the true linguistic proficiency that the abroad context is expected to enhance.

Although a considerable number of studies have proved that study abroad is indeed a productive context for language learning, there are many other factors that play important roles in the language learning and using process, which would bring out different outcomes as one might not think they would. By conducting longitudinal case studies of four mainland undergraduate students' English learning and practicing experiences in Hong Kong, Gao (2010) investigated how learners' language learning efforts and strategy use were mediated by contextual conditions as well as learners' agency. He also revealed the differences in learners' will and capacity to act led to the diverse perceptions of learning contexts and different levels of satisfactory about their learning progress. During the time of year abroad, it is difficult for many students to make friends and implement social interaction in terms of L2 learning (Meier & Daniels, 2013). When students' contacts with local people are not satisfactory, they always have the default option of spending time with their compatriots (Block, 2007). In the case study of two L2 learners' studying abroad experience, learners' achievements are shown to be qualitatively

different in line with their belief changes in study abroad context (Yang & Kim, 2011). It is also worth noticing that it is not always easy for the learner to create opportunities to use target language due to diverse social and contextual factors. By examining two informal conversations between the L2 learner and his NS friends, Kurata (2010) found it is not necessarily easy for a L2 learner to create opportunities to use and learn L2 in informal natural settings due to diverse social and contextual factors. In the context of using Chinese in China, creating more opportunities for international students and encouraging them effectively to interact with local Chinese people were suggested in order to improve students' Chinese proficiency (Du, 2013).

Emerging from extensive reading of SA reports, Coleman's (2010) proposed concentric circles model in order to better understand the learners' dynamic socialization patterns in the SA context. There are three different social spheres: compatriots or people who shares the same home language with the learner (inner circle), international people (middle circle) and with local people and native speakers of the target language (outer circle). Sojourners' socialization patterns in this study are accordingly divided into Finnish people, international group and local Chinese. Social networks are a major account for the variability of sojourners' residence experience, as it can determine sojourners' access to linguistic and cultural input and target language interactions. To complement SCT, concentric circles model provides a more general picture of sojourners' residence abroad experiences by conceiving

socialization patterns that emerge from sojourners' social networks. It allows the categorization of different relationships that sojourners established, maintained and developed during their sojourn, therefore it is helpful for us to understand and interpret the various language using experiences that sojourners had.

Although there are some studies in intercultural business communication between China and Finland (e.g. Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013), there is no study at all done so far on Finnish sojourners' experiences in using Chinese in China. This study not only aims to further general understanding of residence abroad experience but also quite specifically examine how Finnish participants in the study experienced the situation.

3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

3.1 Research Questions

This study addresses following questions:

1. How do contextual factors, host community as well as the relationships between sojourners and host community affect sojourners' language using choices and experiences?
2. How is sojourners' agency practiced in the language using experiences?

3.2 The Participants

Three Finnish sojourners participated in this study: Aino, Niko and Hanna (pseudonyms). They all studied Chinese in China from 2011 to 2012 as classmates in city A and went to China again for different reasons in 2015. For this time, Aino (female) and Niko (male) went to city B for working, and Hanna (female) went to city C because of her husband's work, yet she got a work later during the conduction of this study. The sojourns of Aino and Niko lasted around 6 months while Hanna has been living in China since the start of the study. Between these two time points, Hanna had not been in China; Aino returned as a tourist for 5 days in 2014; and Niko had lived in China for five months for working in city B and one year later for Master studying in city C.

3.3 Research Methods

I was one of the tutors of these Finnish exchange students in my home university from 2011 to 2012. The good relations between participants and me enabled me to have better access to the participants and a better chance to understand what they were telling me.

Each participant was asked to write his/her previous Chinese learning experiences in city A in the beginning. Participants wrote their experiences by answering 7 guidance questions (see appendix 1) and sent to me by email. Interviews (by Skype or face to face) were conducted during the participants' stay in China (except the last interview of Niko was conducted when he came back to Finland). Each participant was interviewed on average 5 times over 6 months, each interview lasting around 10 to 25 minutes.

The first interviews of each participant were based on the participants' Chinese learning experiences in city A and more attention was paid for participants' plans and feelings in the adapting stage. Follow up interviews were intended to track participants' engagement with the host community, including activities they had with local people, and pleasant and unpleasant experiences when they used Chinese. Different examples of using Chinese language were asked in each interview and the motile agency of participants was elicited from those significant experiences.

There were two data sets in this study: the participants' Chinese learning experiences and the series of interviews with them. Both data sets were

analyzed by applying qualitative content analysis method, “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). The analysis was partly theory driven by Coleman’s concentric circles model and SCT, and was also partly data driven in order to complement the analysis.

3.4 Ethical Solutions

Participants were contacted personally to attend this study. They were also told that they were able to withdraw during the conduct of study. All names of participants are pseudonyms, as well as the names of cities. Interviews were voice recorded by my personal mobile phone and then transferred and stored in my personal computer. The time of interviews was decided according to participants’ schedule. All the interviews were conducted in English and the recordings were transcribed following the conventions of standard English structure.

3.5 Trustworthiness

By applying two different methods in data collection: interviewing and collecting narratives, the trustworthiness of the study was increased. According to Pavlenko (2001), L2 learning stories are “unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second

language learning and socialization” (p. 167), which demonstrates the suitability of collecting narratives for the purpose of this study. Continuous interviews concerning the same areas with the same participants increased the consistency during the data collection (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) and ensured the trustworthiness of the study as well, since chances to clarify and reflect were given. Credibility of the study was also established by collecting rich interview data. The transcribed interview data and narrative data were read through several times to obtain a sense of the whole, and were initially coded according to the content of the data. The categorization of this study was partly theory driven by Coleman’s concentric circles model and SCT, and was also partly data driven so that more suitable categories were created in order to better answer the research questions of interest. Both narrative data and interview data were extracted in relation to the specific research questions with clarification of data resources. Suitable “meaning units” (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) were selected from data in order to better illustrate the phenomena. Participants’ voices were accurately reflected by means of presenting representative quotations from narratives and transcribed texts, which increased the conformability of findings (Polit & Beck, 2012). Along with the direct quotations, varying degrees of interpretations were included, which are considered as an essential part by Graneheim & Lundman (2004) when discussing the trustworthiness of results. At the same time, the clarifications between participants’ voices and author’s interpretations allowed readers to

look for alternative interpretations, which also increased the trustworthiness of results (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). The credibility of the analysis was confirmed by checking for the representativeness of the data as a whole. And the credibility of results of this study was improved by means of checking interpretations against raw data (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Even though the present study specifically addresses three Finnish participants' experiences of using Chinese in China, findings can be transferred to other settings such as residence abroad, SA and SLA. Precise descriptions about contexts and participants' experiences also improved the transferability of the study (Elo et al., 2014).

The limitations of this study are obvious, not least because it is the first attempt to investigate Finnish sojourners' experiences of using Chinese in China and there are little closely related literature that could be drawn on. The number of participants was small although it provided better chances to understand each participant's experiences, affections and agency, which is consistent with the aim of the study. The friendship between participants and me enabled me to have more reliable and valid information for this study, albeit it may affect the data analysis as well because of the possible bias from me. Gender differences may be should also be taken into consideration, as in the findings; two female sojourners appeared to be more sensitive about locals' reaction and attitude whereas the male sojourner did not consider those as important factors.

4 RESULTS

The presentation of the themes in this chapter is partly based on Coleman's concentric circles model and partly on the themes that emerged from the data (e.g. interlocutor scaffolding, legitimate peripheral participation, cultural differences).

4.1 Languages of Concentric Circles

By adopting Coleman's (2010) concentric circles model, this chapter is started with illustrating three sojourners' language using experiences, choices as well as reasons during their this time of stay.

4.1.1 Inner Circle

According to Coleman (2010), inner circle refers to compatriots or people who shares the same mother tongue with sojourners. In this study, inner circle encompasses Finnish people in sojourners' social networks. In the inner circle, Finnish language was mostly used when sojourners communicated with compatriots. There were also exceptions; for instance, Aino spoke English as a polite gesture when there were people from other nationalities who did not know Finnish. Hanna taught her husband some Chinese words by using children's picture cards, yet only in a short period of time. It was mentioned in Hanna's previous Chinese learning experiences that she also practiced Chinese

with her Finnish classmates.

Both Aino and Niko had comparatively more Finnish colleagues than Hanna did. Some of their colleagues could speak very good Chinese, which was encouraging for Aino and Niko in terms of language learning.

I really look up to them and I...I think it's encouraging to see some Finns can actually master the language. Of course...uh... they all, who speak Chinese, they have been in the country for several years. So I know that if I want to have my Chinese in the same level, I need to spend more time in China. (Aino, 1st interview)

Niko also said, "at work it would be nice to be as good as some old colleagues". Meanwhile, he held the same point of view with Aino that, " I think my level is ok compare to the amount I have studied, it's okay. I don't worry about it." Thus it can be told that Finnish colleagues who could speak good Chinese had positive influence on Aino and Niko in terms of Chinese learning.

As Coleman (2013) argued, part of the function of the inner circle is to relieve the stress and effort from target language use. It is therefore natural and understandable that sojourners tend to spend more time with their compatriots and use their first language especially when their contacts with local people are not satisfactory (Block, 2007) or their ideal self-image cannot be maintained and protected (Aveni, 2005).

4.1.2 Middle Circle

In Coleman's (2010) account for middle circle, it represents out-group members (often foreign students) in the SA context. When it is applied in this study,

middle circle refers to international friends (not Chinese or Finnish) sojourners had during their sojourn. It was found that, not surprisingly, English was the dominant language in the middle circle interactions. Due to the fact that all the sojourners had good command of English, and the experience of working, studying and living abroad enabled sojourners to use English naturally. Speaking Chinese with someone who could speak fluent English or Finnish was not the first option of Niko.

I guess there isn't really point to speak Chinese, unless I want, I have the purpose of learning. If the person is, for example, fluent in English or Finnish, so I, it's...then besides that, maybe it's not so...like, I don't know...weird to speak Chinese then maybe. (Niko, 5th interview)

Niko's explanation could also account for other sojourners' language choices in the middle circle to some degree. Hanna's Chinese studying group with a Dutch girl was an exception, in this case, an agreement was in force to use Chinese at least partly when they studied together.

And we decided to study together, so we make some assignments together and meet about once a week, and yeah... But now she suggested that we should get a Chinese teacher, because it would be nice to study with someone. Because obviously we have a lot of questions that need to be answered and we can't, we can't answer them ourselves. (Hanna, 2nd interview)

Hanna found the study group was helpful for her Chinese learning, even though she had only had one meeting with the Dutch girl by that time.

It hasn't really started very well yet, because it was only one time. So we are only kind of trying to see what we can do. But it's only helping, you know, because we are making assignments for each other, so I have to study for that meeting. And also she knows some stuff I don't and I know some stuff that she doesn't. It's, I think it's very helpful. It like, it motivates me to learn more. (Hanna, 2nd interview)

It obviously had positive effect on Hanna's Chinese learning to have this study group, engaging herself in the study activity motivated Hanna to study

more Chinese. Although the study group had unfortunately lasted until Hanna started her work because of her limited time and energy.

4.1.3 Outer Circle

Outer circle, according to Coleman (2010), refers to the L2-speaking local community in sojourners' social networks. In this study, local community including Chinese friends, colleagues and random people formed the middle circle of sojourners'. Variety of chances to use L2 are furnished in residence abroad context, whereas it was found out that sojourners' opportunities of speaking Chinese were significantly decreased when they were identified as able speakers of English, vice versa, sojourners tended to use English when interlocutors were recognized as fluent English speakers. According to sojourners' descriptions, many of their Chinese friends were internationally minded. For example, Aino said:

But I feel like all my Chinese friends, uh, they are all like very, interested in international things as well. So they kind of like, have this international mind. And I think they are not like ordinary Chinese people. They are a bit like, they want to go abroad or they hang out with foreigners. I think partly they want to hang out with me also because I am a foreigner. So sometimes just stuff like that. (Aino, 2nd interview)

English was mostly used when Niko was bonding with his Chinese friends because they were used to do so, and additionally they were all good English speakers so it was easier to use English when they communicate. Niko also added that because he did not meet those Chinese friends so often, so they were just hanging out when they spent time together, rather than practicing Chinese.

Unfortunately, Hanna did not make any Chinese friends during this sojourn, yet she was deeply immersed in the Chinese social environment. She had Chinese cleaning ladies who could only spoke Chinese, her colleagues were mostly Chinese, she went to gym regularly where she took yoga classes that were instructed in Chinese, which was helpful for her Chinese listening as Hanna said. It seemed that Hanna would have plenty of chances to use Chinese, however, her work required her to use English and the communication with cleaning ladies was conducted only in Chinese, which turned out to be stressful for Hanna. Even though she admitted it would be a good opportunity to learn or to develop her Chinese when she communicated with cleaning ladies, Hanna was avoiding one cleaning lady since the cleaning lady talked a lot of things that she could not understand. And also when Hanna just wanted to sit quietly at home, the cleaning lady kept talking in Chinese, which was disturbing for Hanna. She was not comfortable at all when she was speaking Chinese to the cleaning lady.

That just shows that when I have to talk completely Chinese, it would be a good opportunity to learn or to develop myself. But then it's so stressful that I tried, tried to avoid it. I'm such a weep. (Hanna, 5th interview)

This kind of experience has apparently affected Hanna's willingness to use Chinese in a negative way. This negative affection, at the same time, has caused the reducing opportunities of using Chinese not only with the cleaning lady, but also with other Chinese who could become possible interlocutors with her.

Different from other sojourners, Niko has a family member who is

Chinese. It may be an advantage for language use and learning in many people's opinions, however, in the fact, English was mostly used when they communicated with each other. Speaking Chinese at home means, "stepping out of the comfort zone at home and few people would want that actually", Niko said. When he was asked whether he was given enough chance to speak Chinese at home, Niko answered, "it's not about chance, it's just choice" and he said it was always possible to speak Chinese at home if he choose to do so. Even though Chinese was not the dominant language between them, the family member had positive influence on Niko's Chinese L2 use and learning overall. For instance, Chinese input was available for Niko when she spoke with others, her standard mandarin gave good examples for Niko to catch and she taught Niko a lot of words as well.

It appeared important to have Chinese friends or colleagues who could only speak Chinese or who were willing to use Chinese with sojourners. By drawing on Hanna's previous Chinese learning experiences and Niko's experiences of using Chinese with a colleague, it was proved to be a good practice to interact with this kind of Chinese people. In the end of the last interview, Aino said she should find Chinese friends who could only speak Chinese to her as she experienced in her exchange year. It is also worth noticing that when Aino was asked if she is more confident to speak Chinese with random people or with Chinese friends, she answered without hesitation that, "with random people, because I don't want to lose my face in front of my

friends,” from which we could tell speaking Chinese with Chinese friends is not as easy as it may look. It requires sojourners not being afraid of being a fool and to take the risk of making mistakes, which may probably happen during the interaction between native speakers (NS) and NNSs. Additionally, not all the Chinese people can be a good interlocutor when they communicate with NNSs. The following chapter is going to present the important capacity – interlocutor scaffolding, which, however, has not been paid much attention.

4.2 Interlocutor Scaffolding

When Aino was asked how comfortable and confident for her to speak Chinese in different cities, she said:

I don't think that makes difference with my confidence like the city, no. More it's like just the person who happens to be there, listen to me. So... because sometimes I have people, they want to understand more and they are like, helping me when I'm like stumbling like on some words. But then sometimes people are just like "nah, the 外国人 (foreigner) like", can't stand. So it doesn't, it doesn't depend on the city, it depends on the people. But as I said like in [city A], I had the experience that there was a lot of like very friendly people, and they were really like interested in us. (Aino, 5th interview)

Her answer indicated the different attitudes and responses from people to her Chinese and how these differences affected Aino's willingness to speak Chinese. Tolerance to NNS's Chinese varies from one person to another and even people from different cities, which will be discussed in the last chapter.

Besides the stressful Chinese speaking experiences with the cleaning lady, Hanna also had good experiences of using Chinese with a driver who drove her from one office to train station. They talked the whole ride only in Chinese about different kind of topics.

I think it was really good conversation. And, I was happy that we did that. And, it was easy to talk with him because, well...I think it's just some people know it and some people don't. But he had a good, uh...good, natural talent, to realize when I didn't understand what he said. Because at some point, um...if I talk to Chinese people, and they say a lot of things that I don't understand, then I start to like, nod and start to say like "um, um" when I really don't know what's going on. But he, he knew still that I did not understand him, so he, try something else. (Hanna, 4th interview)

Despite of the limitation of Hanna's Chinese, the driver carried on the conversation by scaffolding her with changed expressions that Hanna could understand. He was actively listening to Hanna, was sensitive to the moments when Hanna needed help and was able to support her by using appropriate expressions and ways of speaking Chinese so that Hanna could still continue the conversation. Hanna's willingness of speaking Chinese was maintained and even enhanced. Even though both the driver and the cleaning lady could only speak Chinese, Hanna felt comfortable, confident and pleasant while talking with the former one, whereas felt totally conversely with the later one. These two totally different experiences of using Chinese of Hanna indicated how important role interlocutors play in NNS's language using experiences.

Language teachers are supposed to take the role of scaffolding to help students to learn the target language, as what the driver did in order to continually engage Hanna to the topic. However, Niko's Chinese teacher did not meet his expectation in this respect. He would have liked to have the class that could be more comprehensive, to be specific, he would have liked the teacher explain things also in English so that he could engage to the topic better and would have liked to have more interaction with the teacher, rather than stick to the text. Beside the Chinese teacher, Niko also experienced talking with

other people who has the ability “to speak in a way that foreigners easily understand”. He had dinner together with a friend and spoke almost only Chinese about all kinds of things. Different from chatting with shopkeepers who spoke with accent and used strange expressions, Niko felt it was easier to communicate with this friend. He attributed this to the more standard mandarin of the friend and her better understanding of his Chinese, he also thought it helped when the friend could understand some English if he could not say all in Chinese. As Aveni (2005) mentioned, sojourners as well as learners can only present ideal self by using their native language due to their limited proficiency of target language. Even though English was not participants’ mother tongue in this study, speaking English was natural for them and they were better at articulate their opinions by using English than only use Chinese, which indicated the importance of speaking at least some English would make NNS feel more relaxed and accordingly could interact with NS with more ideal self. Consistent with this, Hanna also thought speaking some Chinese language is a good way to make Chinese people feel relaxed, especially for the ones who are not confident with their English. Although it was argued that second language acquisition (SLA) researchers consider NS and NNS as inherently problematic encounters (Firth & Wagner, 1997), being acquainted with the ability of interlocutor scaffolding was showed to be beneficial not only for the language teachers, but also for tutors and others who would like to have more interaction with foreign sojourners in the target

language.

Speaking the language with a simpler structure and vocabulary so that NNS could understand more comprehensively, Yule (2010) argues this type of talking may be beneficial not only for the immediate communication success, but also for providing beginner language learners with clearer and more comprehensive L2 input. Language teachers, without doubt, are expected to have this capability in order to help students in their foreign language learning process. In this study, however, a language teacher was not being able to talk with the learner in the way that is better for him to understand. On the contrary, other interlocutors like a driver and a Chinese friend were seen to be good at scaffolding sojourners, which provided a friendly environment for sojourners to use Chinese language. It has been discussed by MacIntyre et al. (1998) that L2 confidence is directly related to the learners' willingness to communicate and more contact with the host community. In this study, sojourners' "willingness to communicate" (MacIntyre et al., 1998, 2003) was enhanced while chatting with the interlocutors who know how to talk with L2 learners, and consequently, sojourners' L2 confidence was boosted and they were more satisfied with the language using experiences. Through those meaningful interactions with NSs, space was created for sojourners' negotiated language input and comprehensive language output; their L2 skills were used and practiced, which therefore led to their development of L2. In addition, due to the limited knowledge of L2, sojourners inevitably encounter the situation that

they cannot express themselves well so that interlocutors could understand their intents. Accordingly, strategic competence is required and important when sojourners communicate with the host community. As Yule (2010) argued, strategic competence is the ability to overcome possible communication problems in interaction and flexibility of L2 use is essential in communicative success.

This study thus concluded several features that brought up by participants, which may account for the NS's good scaffolding ability. For instance, have the willingness to understand foreigners' Chinese, talk with suitable speed, do not use too complicated expressions and change the expression when the NNS seems not to understand, speak quite standard mandarin, instead of talking alone, involve NNS in the conversation and pay active attention to what is said.

4.3 Legitimate Peripheral Participation

4.3.1 Actual Conversation

It was mentioned by all the participants that they have had and would like to have again the "actual conversation" with local Chinese people, by which indicated the wish of them to be full participation of host community. For example, during the exchange year, Niko felt he had succeed in studying Chinese since he could have actual conversations in Chinese friends' home and Hanna felt "really great" to have actual conversations with a taxi driver. When Aino was asked about her Chinese learning goals for her sojourn in China this

time, she said she would like to have actual conversation like she used to have in the exchange year. In the previous learning experience, Hanna also provided an example about the Chinese using experience with her tutor.

Also, I had a volunteer (tutor) at my school. She was really nice and helpful, but we never spent that much time together because I didn't speak Chinese and she was (I think) a bit shy to use English. But in our last meeting before I returned to Finland we talked more than an hour, just using Chinese. That was the first time I felt a real connection with her, and it felt great (although it made me hope that we should've had dinner together sooner). (Hanna, previous Chinese learning experiences)

According to Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of "legitimate peripheral participation", newcomers (sojourners) inevitably participate in the community of old-timers (host community) that requires knowledge and skills in order to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practice of community. In terms of language learning, NNSs learn from NSs through interactions with them, as NSs are certainly more advanced users of the target language. By having those actual conversations with the host community, all the participants' intentions to learn were engaged and the meaning of learning was configured. As Yule (2010) discussed, producing comprehensive output through meaningful interaction is an important element for learner's L2 development, yet it is one of the most difficult things to provide in the classes. Sharing the same point of view, Aino thought practicing outside the classroom was an essential part of learning to speak Chinese when she talked about the previous Chinese learning experiences.

Besides the language learning aspect, sojourners used language as a vehicle to communicate with the host community in social practices. Their roles

of social agents were becoming more active, and the roles of L2 learners were getting weaker during the process of moving towards full participation in the local community.

4.3.2 Contribute to Community

Contributing to others by using Chinese language seemed to be another theme in this study. By means of speaking Chinese, all the sojourners have helped both NSs and NNSs of Chinese language in different situations, from which their self value was realized not only as a language user but also as a newcomer who would like to participate in the host community.

When Hanna was asked for a pleasant experience of using Chinese, she depicted a trip with friends who were also NSs of Chinese.

I think my best experience was when we went on the trip to Huangshan. And I was the only one of us, four girls who spoke Chinese. Well, some of them only spoke a few words. But I was able to communicate with all those... hotel people, and when we went to have dinner, then I would order. And I would translate, because we travelled a lot, we took a lot of buses and trains, usually it was very confusing about where we should go. And I was happy that I was able to understand directions, and you know, they called me the manager, trip manager. Because I was the only one who knew what was going on. So it was the happy experience. (Hanna, 2nd interview)

Taking the role of “trip manager” when others were less fluent speakers of Chinese, Hanna was happy when she could deal with things with her Chinese and helped friends. In the similar situation, when Niko was with colleagues who could not speak Chinese very well, or whose pronunciation was not as good as his, he helped them to tell waitress what they would like to have in a restaurant. Being a more experienced Chinese speaker among friends and colleagues naturally took Hanna and Niko to the position of “manager” to

deliver messages and cope with problems. At the same time, Hanna and Niko also played the role of “bridge” to connect newcomers and old-timers who were not able to communicate successfully with their limited language skills. With respect to their friends and colleagues, both Hanna and Niko were relative old-timers since they mastered the language better than others who were in the community, they were aware of the fact of this and used and developed their language skills through the social practices. It is also the process of becoming a more skilled language user and becoming part of host community of practice that “legitimate peripheral participation” concerns (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The successful experiences also enhanced sojourners’ confidence and satisfaction of using Chinese, through which sojourners’ identities were reconstructed.

Hanna shared also another experience of using Chinese, which could well illustrate the function of bridging that she played between newcomers and old-timers. Hanna went on a trip with her husband and other two international friends, together with the husband’s driver, who was Chinese. When they needed to say something to the driver, it was always Hanna who did it since she was the one who had the best Chinese language skills. By doing this, Hanna got positive feedback from both sides.

They, just my friends said that... [Husband] also said that, it’s really nice to have me along, so we can actually communicate with the driver and the driver said the same thing. He said that “oh, we usually just try to, like they have some apps on the phone like translate, translator app, and that’s how they communicate and he told me how nice it is to actually be able to talk. (Hanna, 4th interview)

In addition to assist NNSs of Chinese, Aino used Chinese to help Chinese people out of China when she was traveling. Aino saw a group of Chinese who did not know where they were supposed to go or did not know what to do in the airport, so she told them in Chinese what should they do. She was happy as she said, "I helped them, it felt nice". Instrumental function of language was carried out and language skills that Aino obtained became useful and important in this situation. Her self-value was realized not only as a language user, but also as a member of the community, the community that she would like to move toward full participation in.

4.3.3 Being Taken Seriously

Many study abroad participants have experienced not being taken seriously as speakers of the target language (Block, 2007). It is indeed difficult for sojourners to overcome this kind of social obstacles and constantly engage themselves in the language acquisition activities like Alice did as Kinginger (2004) argued. They may feel upset, annoyed or even lose the confidence and patience to maintain the language learning and using activities. It was hurtful for Hanna when she tried hard to use Chinese and felt like was not taken seriously, as she wrote in her previous Chinese learning experiences:

Sometimes it was frustrating that some (well-meaning) Chinese people spoke English to me even though I spoke Chinese to them. When I tried to use Chinese with them they kind of just shrugged it off, or - even worse - snickered. It made me feel like I was really bad and it affected my confidence in speaking Chinese. (Hanna, previous Chinese learning experiences)

For other two participants, Niko felt a bit annoyed when he got responses in English even though he spoke Chinese to the waitress in a café. Aino experienced the same thing when she was talking with a hostel reception staff, she guessed it was because the staff wanted to practice English with her.

Besides English responses, sometimes sojourners were not even listened when they spoke Chinese to the interlocutors. When Niko was speaking Chinese to a waitress in a restaurant, the waitress was very slow at understanding him.

She didn't want to understand my Chinese, so I had to wake her up a little. Like "hey, I'm speaking Chinese here, you can understand". So she understood after that. (Niko, 2nd interview)

Other than the slow reaction from waitress, Hanna faced a saleswoman who had a panic when she asked for help in a bakery, although she was speaking Chinese.

She didn't really listen to what I was saying. She was like, "I don't speak English". Also, I am trying to speak Chinese. She just asked some other Chinese person who was there that, "Uh, I don't understand her, can you translate?" And then I spoke the same thing as I spoke to the, to the cashier. I told the other Chinese and she understood me, but yeah. Maybe just, some of them are not used to the accent, I guess. (Hanna, 1st interview)

Hanna further realized speaking at least a little Chinese is a good way to make people feel relaxed. Since not all of the Chinese people are equipped with good English skills, and among the ones who can speak English, part of them are not confident and comfortable to use the skills they have to actually communicate with foreigners. Niko, for example, once called a customer to talk about complicated issues in English since he needed to be accurate. It should

not be a problem to communicate in English as the customer was from a big international company; however, the customer got panic and could not answer his questions properly and the conversation became frustrating in the end. This case also manifested another good side to speak Chinese with Chinese people, that is, to make them feel more relaxed, as Hanna said. Not merely from the respect of language learning and use, but also for the reason of real interactions with the host community, friendly and relaxing environment must be more helpful than the one with low tolerance of mistakes.

4.4 Cultural Differences

4.4.1 Working Culture

In a company that was mostly constituted of Chinese people, Hanna expected her new colleagues to be interested in her, come to talk to her or invite her to have lunch, as it would happen in the Finnish context. But people did not approach her at all in the new office, surprisingly. She was not certain but she attributed this to different working culture.

Uh...well...well, partly I think that maybe the work culture is just different, that people don't talk that much or something, I don't know. But maybe it's because I am different. Like, I'm a foreigner so I'm...they don't know how to communicate with me, or something. And I feel kind of, kind of the same, because...they are foreign, so I don't really know the appropriate way to communicate with them. So I feel kind of...[sigh] I should take more initiative probably. Like, I should start conversation more. I'm just, [sigh] yeah... I'm maybe open too much that because, this is their country, that they would talk to me more. I don't know. (Hanna, 5th interview)

As a newcomer in the community, Hanna would like to strike up relationships with her new colleagues, whereas the different working culture

became the obstacle on the way. As time went by, the attribution of independent work that Hanna always had made it less necessary to communicate with her Chinese colleagues. In addition to the requirement to use English at work, this work culture difference did not appear to be a big problem in the following interviews. It was showed that intercultural communication knowledge in the working place was lacked from Hanna and her Chinese colleagues. Nevertheless, different working culture should be familiarized to both sojourners and Chinese colleagues, as it may improve the satisfactory of communication from both sides, which is essential in working life.

Unlike Hanna, both Aino and Niko worked with Finnish colleagues as well as Chinese colleagues, who were conversant with Finnish working culture. In the study of examining directness of the communication style of Chinese professionals who work for Finnish companies in China, it was suggested that Chinese and Finnish communication may be converging when they use English as a lingua franca in the business field: Chinese are becoming more direct and Finnish are becoming less direct (Kankaanranta & Lu, 2013). With the consensus that clarity and directness contribute to the effectiveness of the communication in the workplace, Finnish and Chinese make adjustment in order to work more efficiently together. In this kind of working climate, Aino and Niko did not encounter the different working culture as strongly as Hanna did, or at least they had more compatriots who they could share experiences,

discuss about these confusions and seek out solutions.

4.4.2 Style of Communication

To answer why she did not feel comfortable at all with the cleaning ladies, Hanna partly attributed to Chinese style of communication, which is very different from what she used to in Finland. She encountered this kind of challenge when she tried to communicate with cleaning ladies, customers and colleagues. Especially with cleaning ladies since they could only speak Chinese, which made it more difficult for Hanna to present an ideal self and state her wants.

When you negotiate something, um...the, I think in Finland, what you do is that you...uh...that if would speak to my 阿姨 (cleaning lady), I would, uh, state what I want and then the 阿姨 (cleaning lady) would say, because she works for me, she would say "okay". But, there is this and this problem, and I would say, "Uh, okay, I will try to fix this". But in China it goes like this that, um...I say what I want, and then the 阿姨 (cleaning lady) say, says that it cannot be done, that there is this and this problem. (Hanna, 5th interview)

Instead of seeking solutions, Hanna always got the direct rejection from the cleaning lady that things couldn't be done, which made Hanna feel stressful and frustrated. She felt like, "I try to achieve something, which the other one does not want me to achieve". As a customer, Hanna felt very uncomfortable when she needed to negotiate with the host community.

If there is a situation that I'm the customer and there is a problem, that's, that's always a very uncomfortable situation. Because again I feel that I don't get to say what I want to say. (Hanna, 5th interview)

It is partly because of the limited language skill of Hanna, that she could not express herself in Chinese as a customer. On the other hand, it is also

because the cleaning ladies and other Chinese interlocutors could not speak good English, which made it not possible for Hanna to negotiate in English, the language that she mastered better and therefore could better state her wants. Considering that interlocutors were not willing to negotiate, Hanna changed from an active position to a very passive place in the communication process. If the same situation happened in Finland, Hanna thought, she, as a customer, would get better response from interlocutors, rather than a direct rejection. Consequently Hanna tried to avoid communicating with the cleaning ladies, by which her willingness to use and develop Chinese was undermined. When spoke Chinese with Chinese colleagues, Hanna also did not feel comfortable as she always felt she does not get her point to cross. Communication went smoother when it was daily conversation without negotiation included.

4.4.3 Culture of Praise

All the sojourners got compliments from host community about their Chinese, not matter in the exchange year or during this time of stay. Sometimes their Chinese was highly praised even though they just said few words or sentences in Chinese so they quit taking those compliments seriously after a while. It also depends on how wide the interlocutor was exposed to the NNS, as in cities that are more international, people may be more used to NNS speaking Chinese and accordingly have higher exception from NNS's Chinese level and feel less surprised when they hear NNS speak good Chinese.

Compared with the praise in Finnish culture, Chinese people may highly comment on sojourners' Chinese as a compliment, rather than a truthful assessment of sojourners' abilities. It could boost sojourners' confidence of speak Chinese anyway, as it did to Hanna according to her previous Chinese learning experiences. Any kind of positive feedback was always welcome for her except perhaps the following kind:

One or two times I was with a Finnish classmate and someone might say that my Chinese was better than his/hers. Even though it is technically a compliment towards me, it is not really part of Finnish culture to single out one person at the expense of others, so it just made me feel really uncomfortable and embarrassed. (Hanna, previous Chinese learning experiences)

Albeit it was a compliment to her, apparently the culture difference of praising between China and Finland caused the negative affection on Hanna, and possibly on her classmate as well, which may in turn affect the classmate's willingness to speak and study Chinese.

4.5 Balance Between Working and Learning

Unlike SA participants, sojourners in this study lived abroad with the focus on work rather than studying language. Accordingly challenges occur when sojourners want to learn Chinese while working at the same time. When Hanna was asked about how work has affected her Chinese learning, she answered:

I think it has affected quite a lot. Just, as I, as I said before. Um...that I don't need to use Chinese that much in my work and I'm not expected to use it. So, uh...I don't have time to study on my own. So...Chinese, Chinese learning has, has unfortunately become less of a priority nowadays. Even though I don't want it to happen, but that's what has happened. (Hanna, 5th interview)

She was the one who struggled the most among three participants with

identity as a worker and a language learner. In the beginning of her sojourn, Hanna was highly motivated to study Chinese; this passion lasted until she got work. She tried to use various learning strategies to keep the Chinese studying continue, for instance, she bought a Chinese book and used phone application to learn some characters. Hanna even had a study group with a Dutch girl; they made assignments for each other so that they could learn from making and completing those assignments. But it also appeared to them that they needed a Chinese teacher who could answer their questions that they could not answer themselves. This study group was an active step taken by Hanna, whereas it broke up since she got a job and had no energy for that. Hanna tried to study Chinese, as she truly understood it is a good chance to study Chinese when she is in China, albeit work became the priority of her.

But I just said to husband this week that, that...I really...um...if I don't study Chinese now, when I have good chance, then I will regret it when I go back to Finland. So I think I should try to study more, and make it more like a priority. (25th, June) It has not been a priority but I think I'm starting to get the motivation to do something. (Hanna, 4th interview)

Hanna's desire of learning Chinese clashed with her work, not only because work occupied a lot of time and energy of her, but also because her work required her to speak English and it would not be a good idea to speak Chinese in the workplace. From these perspectives, Hanna's motivation of learning and using Chinese was undermined albeit she endeavored to do so. It was apparently daunting for Hanna since she could not meet the expectation for herself. She depicted herself as a "lousy student" when she hadn't touched

the book for studying Chinese purpose in two months. This unsatisfactory for learning and stress from work directly led to less interaction with host community and at the same time, more communication with compatriots and international people, as Hanna described, she was falling into “expat bubble”.

I don't have, after work I don't have energy to try to figure out some amazing plan that how I'm gonna to meet Chinese people. It's just easier to meet the friends that I have and just relax or something. And I'm starting to...think that I'm kind of falling into this expat. (Hanna, 5th interview)

She further explained:

That I'm start to falling into the place that I live in China but I don't really know any Chinese people. And, yeah...and I don't speak Chinese anything. But I never thought that would happen but...I don't really...yeah...I'm too busy. (Hanna, 5th interview)

Other than Hanna's struggle between work and learning Chinese, Aino and Niko came to China for work reason this time and took work as priority during the whole sojourn. Both of them used the word “hobby” when they described learning Chinese for this time of stay. By taking this disposition, Aino and Niko did not encounter the challenge to study Chinese and work to the same extent as Hanna did. In addition, Chinese classes were offered and supported by Aino and Niko's workplace whereas Hanna's work required her to speak and use English and Chinese class was therefore not supported by her workplace. This difference inevitably caused sojourners' different experiences of using Chinese at work.

In the case of Niko, workplace played important role in his using and learning Chinese. He used Chinese not only with Chinese colleagues, but also with clients, which provided a lot of opportunities for his Chinese practicing

and developing. By checking dictionary and asking other Chinese colleagues, Niko learnt new words that he encountered at work. Having many colleagues who only spoke Chinese to Niko, he thought, "I will learn, like even without thinking." There was one colleague who always spoke Chinese to Niko even though she was able to speak fluent English. As Niko said himself, it was a good thing because his listening could be developed. He also affirmed the value of using Chinese at work for Chinese learning purpose. Chinese classes were not very useful for Niko this time as he thought the teacher's teaching style did not fit his studying well. However, using Chinese daily at work and outside work was helpful for more fluent and accurate language skills in his point of view. Niko said he has big motivation to study Chinese, for work wise as well, although he did not have specific plan for it.

Many learners have an instrumental motivation. Niko considered it is an advantage for his future work to know Chinese language whereas in Aino's working field, knowing how to speak Chinese is not really a crucial skill.

Therefore she wondered:

Am I just wasting my time try to learn Chinese. But I guess it's never waste. And... I don't know. It feels good to like, learn more. And...yeah, it's kind of like a hobby. (Aino, 3rd interview)

Conceiving learning Chinese as a hobby, Aino enjoyed the group Chinese classes with her colleagues and took relaxed attitude for Chinese acquisition outside classroom. For example, she noticed her spoken Chinese was getting better (2nd interview) and her Chinese reading competence had improved as

well (4th interview). Based on her previous Chinese learning experiences and experience from this sojourn period, Aino also added, "It always gets easier to speak Chinese when you are here for longer time"(5th interview). After several months in China, Aino felt more comfortable to speak Chinese and easier to understand Chinese again. She felt "really good" when she read Chinese without trying on the street and she was happy about her Chinese level, as she felt "refreshed" about her Chinese skills. When talked about learning Chinese in China, Aino had some personal opinions.

And...I know. If I would spend more time in China, it would improve a lot. But it's not about what I'm learning at the classroom, I think it's more about like, what I should learn, like using the language outside the classroom, like in the real life situations. And of course studying by myself at home, like trying to remember the new words. (Aino, 4th interview)

Even though Aino also had Chinese colleagues, they usually spoke English with each other. Hence the workplace did not become important for her Chinese use and developing except Chinese classes that supported by the workplace. Compared with private classes, Aino enjoyed more in the group classes since there were more conversations. Took private classes in the last month of her stay in China, Aino was not very satisfied with the teacher as she tended to stick to the topic, yet Aino was also not very active in the classes. However, trying to take all the Chinese classes that she could take showed Aino's motivation to learn more Chinese. She was overall satisfied with her Chinese learning during this sojourn with keep it in mind that work was her priority.

The Chinese using experience of Hanna's husband was also related here, albeit he was not part of the study. As mentioned before, Hanna used children's picture cards to teach her husband Chinese, which he practiced at work. Even though he did not have energy to actually learn more Chinese, he used his limited language skills to try to connect with the Chinese workers. By using workers' native language, Hanna's husband showed his willingness to participate in the local community and put effort on it, although only a limited amount of energy and time could be used to study the language because of the work.

The situation of the sojourners in this study was very similar. Work was the priority, which was very different from their exchange year as students. This fact had affected all sojourners' Chinese learning a lot, as it was energy and time consuming to work as full-time workers, especially for Hanna, who lived far from her workplace. According to sojourners' previous learning experiences that refer to their experiences of studying Chinese as exchange students, they were fully into studying Chinese, had intensive Chinese classes everyday, which helped them to learn and they improved a lot from knowing nothing about Chinese. Sharing experiences about studying and life with other Finnish classmates also had positive influences on sojourners.

4.6 Differences Between Cities

Three cities were involved in this study among which city A was smaller and

less internationalized compared with city B and city C.

4.6.1 Experiences in Using Chinese in City A

Starting from knowing almost nothing about Chinese language, sojourners were in the same level in the beginning of their exchange year. Their Chinese had been improved a lot along with the intensive classes as well as longer time in China. As mentioned earlier, Aino thought the longer sojourners stay in the country, the easier for them to speak the target language. It was especially apparent in the second semester of her exchange year, since she used a lot of Chinese outside classes, communicated successfully by only speaking Chinese and had good conversations with local people. To compare with city B and city C, Aino said she felt lucky that she went to city A for exchange because she actually needed to use a lot of Chinese while in other two bigger cities, the locals speak more English.

Kung-fu hobby was beneficial for Hanna's Chinese practicing and use outside the classroom since it made her to communicate with local people more. She considered it was a very good practice to meet people who could not speak English and tried to communicate with her in Chinese in different occasions. In Hanna's opinion, "just communicating with a foreign language as much as possible is the best way to learn it", and city A furnished variety of chances for her to do that and she did. Moreover, Hanna also practiced Chinese with her Finnish classmates and conceived it's a nice thing to have compatriots who she

could share experiences with.

Both Aino and Hanna thought people from city A were more curious and welcoming and showed interests when they talk, which made them feel nice as they were listened and taken seriously by the host community. Accordingly sojourners were more willing to speak Chinese in this encouraging environment and real connection may be built between them and the host community. Chances to use Chinese also outside the classroom were provided and guaranteed due to the fact that sojourners could not deal things with English, and which in turn facilitated sojourners' Chinese use and improving. On the other hand, not being able to speak English and less interaction with foreigners of locals may lead to their lower ability of understanding sojourners' Chinese, since they might not be used to the accent, as both Aino and Hanna mentioned in the interviews.

4.6.2 Experiences in Using Chinese in City B and City C

Different from city A, there were more chances to speak English in city B and city C, so it's not optimal environment for studying Chinese in bigger cities, as Niko said. Speaking English tended to become an easier choice when sojourners were in bigger cities, "expat bubble" phenomenon occurred more often consequently. Aino noticed some friends she had who went to city B with the purpose of studying Chinese turned out to have many international friends and speak more English than Chinese with them.

With more international people living in these cities, local people were more used to different accents of sojourners who use Chinese as L2, and therefore they could understand better when sojourners tried to communicate in Chinese. Because of the same reason, locals may not be so interested in foreigners compared with the people from city A and accordingly fewer opportunities there were for sojourners to participate in the social practice. Both Aino and Hanna thought locals from bigger cities were busy and mind their own business, which is on the contrary with people from city A, who was nice, friendly, talkative and interested in them.

From the perspective of studying Chinese, as Hanna and Niko mentioned, more chances to take Chinese classes are provided in bigger cities. For instance, there are a lot of companies who can offer various kinds of classes according to sojourners' desire and needs. Niko also paid attention to the teaching resources and quality; he said in bigger cities, there are more experienced teachers and more varieties in courses.

5 DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to find out (1) how contextual factors, host community as well as the relationships between sojourners and host community affect sojourners' language using choices and experiences; and (2) how sojourners' agency was practiced in the language using experiences.

Based on the above, the findings indicated that there are, indeed, challenges as well as opportunities for sojourners when they use Chinese in China. Contextual factors were showed to be important in this respect, as sojourners had only limited time and energy to study Chinese since they took work as priority. It is showed that all the sojourners had different working environment in terms of using and learning Chinese, which in turn mediated their language choices. Hanna was required to speak English at work whereas Aino and Niko were provided with Chinese classes by the workplace. Among the participants, Hanna struggled the most between working and using Chinese, her satisfaction of her Chinese use was getting lower and lower and she felt she was falling into the "expat bubble", in which she did not actively seek opportunities to use Chinese with host community and instead spent time with Finnish and international friends. In addition to speaking Chinese with Chinese colleagues, Niko also took them as learning resources to learn new words while Aino usually used English with her Chinese colleagues, from which the differences choices indicated the active agency exercised by

sojourners. Moreover, the comparison between sojourners' exchange year and this time of stay and different cities also supported the conclusion that contextual matters, not only for sojourners' perceptions of experiences of using Chinese, but also for their language choices, which is consistent with Gao (2010)'s finding.

In addition, sojourners' intercultural competences appeared to be fundamental elements as well, due to the cultural differences between China and Finland. As Coleman (1998) argued that sojourners' sociocultural and intercultural competences are essential elements of the true linguistic proficiency, present study found out it is important and beneficial for sojourners to be equipped with intercultural competences so that they could build deeper and more meaningful relations with the host community. And accordingly the greater interaction with the host community would contribute to the better target language competence (Clément, Noels & Deneault, 2001) and greater intercultural sensitivity (Isabelli-García, 2006), which would enable sojourners to better engage themselves in the sociocultural practices.

The analysis based on Coleman's (2010) concentric circles model showed us clearly with sojourners' language using choices and interactions with compatriots, international people and host community. Concerning the outer circle, which represents the host community, English was mostly used as a communication tool or a way to practice English skills for some Chinese people. The importance of locals who are willing to speak Chinese to sojourners

appeared, especially the ones with good scaffolding ability, which is consistent with SLS and SCT as Duff (2007) argued. According to the findings, for instance, Hanna's nice talk with the driver and Niko's successful conversations with a Chinese friend showed that sojourners' language using experiences may be affected a lot by the interlocutors, along with sojourners' willingness to communicate in the target language and the level of satisfaction. Namely, the interlocutor with good scaffolding ability may have positive effect on sojourners since they know how to talk in the way that is easier for sojourners to understand and can help sojourners to realize communication success; on the contrary, it may have negative influence on sojourners' language use when they communicate with interlocutor who does not know how to scaffold sojourners when they use L2. Those experiences of using Chinese are also related to sojourners' willingness to communicate with host community, as MacIntyre et al. (1998) discussed.

The finding that interactions and relationships between sojourners and host community are crucial social aspects of sojourners' language use in residence abroad context in this study is consistent with previous researches (Church, 1982; Ward & Kennedy 1993; Van Lier, 1998). Being able to participate in and contribute to the community by using the target language was showed to be rewarding for sojourners, such as Hanna's experience of being a "trip manager" for her international friends, Niko helped colleagues to state wants in the restaurant and Aino assisted Chinese tourists in the airport by using

Chinese. Sojourners' satisfaction with themselves was enhanced, as a L2 user and a social agent. At the same time, sojourners gained communicative competence, membership as well as legitimacy in the host community by means of social interaction.

To compare with more international cities and the less international one, advantages and deficiencies from the perspectives of sojourners were presented, which can be helpful for people who intend to go to China with the purpose of studying Chinese. As more international cities may have more chances to take Chinese classes with more varied contents, yet it may be easier for sojourners to fall into the "expat bubble", which runs counter to the aim of studying Chinese. In the smaller cities, on the other hand, there are less chances to get along with English and therefore more opportunities to use Chinese, albeit learning resources and teaching qualities might not be as good as in bigger cities, as Niko said. Based on Hanna and Aino's interviews, the language using experiences with local community might be differ from each other as well, since people in the smaller cities were more curious and interested in foreigners and it was contrary situation in the bigger cities, which may affect sojourners' willingness to use language and the perceptions of language using experiences.

There were similarities as well as differences in three sojourners' experiences of using Chinese in China, which suggests the role of agency of each sojourner. The differences among sojourners can be attributed to different aims of stay, life history, beliefs of using language and levels of L2. For instance,

Aino and Niko, in comparison with Hanna, took work as priority and perceived studying Chinese as hobby throughout the study while Hanna experienced the clash between work and aim of studying and using Chinese. The fact that Hanna was planning to stay longer in China may account for her desire of studying Chinese in spite of obstacles she had. Among the various activities she had with the aim of studying Chinese, the study group she had with another NS of Chinese was Hanna's most active attempt. One close connection she built with host community was with cleaning ladies, which had almost only negative influence on Hanna's experiences of using Chinese. Although she did not make any Chinese friends during her this time of stay, Hanna had two significant experiences of using Chinese to help her Finnish and international friends. By helping her friends, Hanna gained a new identity - "trip manager", and mediated her agency in order to better engage herself in the sociocultural practices and contributed to the community. These positive experiences boosted her confidence of using Chinese and her willingness to use Chinese was enhanced. After experienced huge cultural differences between Finland and China such as communication style differences and working culture differences, Hanna's willingness of using Chinese was undermined, along with the decreasing motivation to strike up relations with the host community. She clearly articulated her wants of studying Chinese throughout the study until the last interview, she felt she was falling into the "expat bubble", in which situation her willingness of using Chinese was undermined and she spent more

time with Finnish and international people, rather than Chinese people.

Niko was the participant who had most experiences of residence in China and using Chinese, which could possibly explain his active utilization of resources to learn Chinese; for example, he learnt new words from colleagues. Also because of his life history, compared with other two participants, Niko maintained more sustainable resources of using Chinese by building connections with the host community such as shopkeepers and colleagues. He seemed to regard using Chinese as a social action since he did not practice Chinese with locals but just used Chinese with them in daily life situations and at work. Benefited from his experiences in relation to China and Chinese family member, Niko was equipped with good intercultural competences and had more resources to refer to when he had problems concerning intercultural communication and sociocultural practices in comparison with Hanna and Aino. In terms of language choices with the family member, Niko showed his initiative as he could always use Chinese if he wants.

Recognizing many of her international friends live in the “expat bubble”, Aino indicated her interests in making friends with Chinese people and integrating into the host community. Although English was the dominant language when Aino communicated with her Chinese friends, as all of her Chinese friends were internationally minded and able speakers of English. Besides the purpose of some of her Chinese friends was to practice English with Aino, from the perspective of Aino, she also did not want to lose face in front of

her Chinese friends due to the possible mistakes when she speaks Chinese. Without the instrumental motivation of studying Chinese, since Chinese skill is not essential for her work, Aino considered studying Chinese as a hobby and held a more relaxed attitude than Hanna did. Aino's agency was clearly mediated during this sojourn, as she felt more comfortable and confidence to use Chinese after she spent longer time in China and she gradually put more effort on using Chinese such as sending Chinese texts with local friends.

Creating and maintaining access to the use of Chinese language is certainly not easy, even though it was in the host country that was with abundance of chances to do so. Sojourners always had choices to spend time with their compatriots or English speakers, especially in the more international cities in China. Considering the complexity of Chinese L2 use in China, it is important for sojourners to renegotiate identities and mediate their agency in order to better engage themselves into the social practices, which is beneficial not only for linguistic development but also for moving towards the full participation of the host community. Therefore it is challenge, however crucial for sojourners to step out of the comfort zone, seek opportunities to use Chinese, take the risks and not being afraid of making mistakes or losing face.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to deeply thank my thesis supervisor, Professor Riikka Alanen, for very valuable comments and suggestions that greatly improved the manuscript.

I would also like to thank the participants in this study for their time and valuable experiences. Without their participation, this study would not have been possible.

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APPENDIX 1

Previous Chinese Learning Experiences

1. When & why did you decide to study Chinese?
2. Did you have any specific plans for your Chinese studying?

Were those goals reached?
3. How was your daily routine there?
4. Did you also practice Chinese outside of classroom? Who did you usually practice with and how did you practice? Do you think it was helpful?
5. Tell me a time or few times when you felt it is challenging or even frustrating to use Chinese language with local Chinese people.

- What did you usually do if native speakers could not understand your Chinese?
6. Tell me a time or few times when you felt successful and happy to practice Chinese with local Chinese people.
7. How did Chinese people comment on your Chinese? How did you feel about their comments?