# THE EFFECTS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ON THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF CHINESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

**Master's Thesis**
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Tutkielman tarkoituksena on selvittää kuinka englannin kieli on vaikuttanut kiinalaisten yliopistotason englannin pääaineopiskelijoiden kulttuuri-identiteettiin. Englannin kieltä Kiinassa on tutkittu paljon, mutta ei juurikaan kulttuurin ja kulttuuri-identiteetin kannalta. Tämä tutkimus pyrkii vastaamaan seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Onko englannin kielen lisääntynyt vaikutus Kiinassa vaikuttanut kiinalaiseen kulttuuriin ja ihmisiin? Jos on, koetaanko muutokset positiivisina vai negatiivisina, ja vaikuttavatko ne jotenkin kiinalaisten kulttuuri-identiteettiin? 2) Ovatko yliopisto-opiskelijoiden omat asenteet kiinalaista kulttuuria kohtaan muuttuneet englannin kielen ja läntisen kulttuurin vaikutuksen alaisuudessa? Jos ovat, koetaanko muutokset positiivisina vai negatiivisina, ja vaikuttavatko ne jotenkin heidän kulttuuri-identiteettiinsä kiinalaisina? 3) Ovatko yliopisto-opiskelijoiden asenteet englannin kieltä ja läntistä kulttuuria kohtaan muuttuneet englannin kielen ja läntisen kulttuurin vaikutuksen alaisena, ja jos on, miten?

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen ja metodologinen viitekehys perustuu etnografiaan. Tutkimusaineisto koostuu kyselylomakkeesta (78 vastaajaa) sekä puolistrukturoiduista haastatteluista (8 osallistujaa). Aineistonkeruu suoritettiin huhti-kesäkuussa 2010 Guangzhoun kaupungissa Kiinassa. Materiaali oli enimmäkseen kvalitatiivista, mutta osa kyselylomakkeesta oli kvantitatiivista. Avointen kysymysten sekä haastattelujen analysoinnissa käytettiin sisällönanalyysia.

Tutkimuksen tulokset viittaavat siihen, että kiinalaiset englannin opiskelijat elävät parhaillaan kahden kulttuurin ristitulessa. Englannin opiskelu on laajentanut heidän ymmärrystään sekä Kiinasta että muusta maailmasta, minkä seurauksena he ovat joutuneet muokkaamaan käsityksiään molemmista. He tuntevat syvää kiintymystä ja velvollisuutta perinteistä kiinalaista kulttuuria kohtaan, mutta ovat samalla erittäin kiinnostuneita länsimaisesta elintavasta sekä länsimaisista vapauden ja itsenäisyyden käsitteistä. Näyttääkin siltä, että he pyrkivät muokkaamaan kulttuuri-identiteettiään siten, että se kattaisi molemmat, sekä kiinalaisen että länsimaisen, aspektin.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

During the past century China has undergone great changes. It could be described as a country that is balancing between preserving the past and building the future. It is "a land curiously both in the throes of dramatic transition yet somehow eternally the same" (Lonely Planet 2007: 33). An important part of this dramatic transition is the changes that the Chinese culture is going through, and how they affect the lives and minds of the Chinese people. Thus, the focus of this study is the changing cultural identity in China. More precisely, the purpose is to find out if and how the influence of the English language and the Western culture affects the cultural identity of Chinese people, as perceived by Chinese university students with knowledge of the English language.

The subject of this study arose from the present world situation. The ceaselessly rising position of China on the international (economical) arena has brought forth increasing need for commerce and communication between China and the West. While Mandarin Chinese is the most spoken mother tongue in the world, with approximately 873 million native and 178 second language speakers (Vistawide 2009), English has established a strong position as the lingua franca of the world, with only 1/3 of all English users (or 1/4, depending on who are qualified as English users) in the world being native speakers of the language (Crystal 2003: 69). This situation is not likely to change overnight to benefit the 1,05 billion people fluent in Chinese, and therefore the need for English-speaking capability has become evident for China as well. In fact, nowadays Mainland China holds the biggest English-learning population in the world (see, for instance, He and Li 2009).

The key concept of the study is cultural identity. The concept of identity concerns everyone. Identity is not only about who we are as individuals, but who we are in relation to others. It is our identities as individuals and as members of different groups that create the feeling of togetherness and

similarity with certain groups and certain people, while separating us from others. Identities are ever changing, and in the globalizing world in which we live today even more so. As the English language is now an increasingly important factor in China, and still today a relatively new one, it is important to take a look at how such a shift in language policies is affecting the people who are experiencing the outcome: the Chinese university students, who have chosen the English language as their main asset for the future.

The main research questions for this study are: 1) Do Chinese university students feel that the increasing need for and use of the English language in China has somehow affected the Chinese culture and people?, and 2) Have the Chinese university students' own attitudes towards the Chinese (and the Western) culture and language changed due to their increased knowledge of the English language and the Western culture(s)? To find that out, the information for this study was gathered in Guangzhou, China, by questionnaires completed by three English language classes, and additional interviews with selected participants. Although the research is done by methods triangulation, it is mainly qualitative and is based on the field of ethnography.

To begin with some background information for the study, in chapter 2, 'Theoretical Background', I will first introduce China, the emphasis being on how China has changed during the last 60-70 years. I will also contemplate on the concepts of cultural identity, globalization and the self. At the end of chapter 2 relevant previous studies are presented. Chapter 3, 'Research design', concentrates on the methods in which this study was performed. First the research questions and aims are presented, after which I will briefly introduce the methodological framework for the study, ethnography, as well as the research data and participants. The last three sections deal with how the data was gathered, reliability and validity issues, and, finally, how the data was analyzed. Chapter 4, 'Analysis', contains the detailed results of the research data, as well as relevant examples of the answers. The chapter is divided between the questionnaire and the interview results. Finally, in chapter 5, 'Discussion', I tie the strings by drawing meaningful conclusions about the

cultural identity of the Chinese university students, using as evidence the results derived from the questionnaires and the interviews. First, however, to the theoretical background, beginning with the introduction of China's recent history, the Chinese culture and society, and the English language in China.

## 2.     CHINA, CULTURAL IDENTITY AND GLOBALIZATION

In this chapter the theoretical background of the study is introduced. Since at the core of the study there are the Chinese university students who participated in it, the first section deals with the country that they come from: China. The subsections deal with the topics of recent history of China, Chinese culture and society, and the role of the English language in China. The second section of this chapter tackles the most important concept in this study, cultural identity, and attempts to clarify how and why the cultural identity of the Chinese people, as well as their perception of the self, has gone through changes during China's recent history. The third section includes a review of the previous studies conducted on similar topics than that of this study, in order to locate the present research in its scientific field.

The first section is divided into three subsections. In the first subsection the history of China is inspected since the rise of the Communist Party and its leader Mao Zedong in 1949 until today. The emphasis is on the main endeavors of the communist regime in order to demonstrate how severely the Chinese culture and society has changed in, and since, those days. The second subsection concentrates on what the changes have been like and how they have affected the Chinese culture and society, as well as some important characteristics of the Chinese culture. In the final subsection the role and position of the English language in China is inspected in order to clarify how

and why it has become such an important part of the education of the young Chinese of today.

## 2.1.    The People's Republic of China

### 2.1.1.    Recent history

One thing that Chinese people love to remind foreigners about is China's history of 5,000 years. It seems to be at the very core of their national pride, in their minds setting them apart from every other nation in the world. Considering this, it is rather shocking how oblivious many of the Chinese people are of their own country's past. To provide a culturally relevant historical context for this study, China's recent history is reviewed briefly in this subsection, beginning from the rise of communism and ending in the present. China's history is filled with tumultuous times and upheavals, especially in the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century. These include the end of Chinese dynasties in 1911, attempts to turn China into a republic, and the falling in the hands of warlords and foreigners – followed by the overwhelming rise of communism with the lead of Mao Zedong, his Great Leap Forward, which left the country devastated with famine and millions of people dead, and the Cultural Revolution (Grasso et al. 2004). After Mao Zedong's death in 1976 China started opening up gradually, which eventually led to the rise of capitalism (although still named socialism) and the path to being one of the leading economies in the world (see page 16).

In 1949 the Communist Party defeated the Nationalist Party in Chinese civil war, resulting in the Nationalist Party members fleeing to Taiwan (Ebrey et al. 2006: 518). The leader of the Communist Party, Mao Zedong, became the ruler of China. By the end of the year, Mao had established the People's

Republic of China (PRC), and the party quickly began restructuring the country (Ebrey et al. 2006: 546). According to Ebrey et al. (2006: 547), the idea was to "fashion a new China, one that would empower peasants and workers and limit the influence of landlords, capitalists, intellectuals, and foreigners". The communist ideology was enforced by institutionalized propaganda, accompanied by the banning of many features of the traditional Chinese culture, along with religion (Ebrey et al. 2006: 548). The most effective means of social and ideological control was the setting up of the *danwei*s, work units. Everyone, including the employed and unemployed, the students and the retired, belonged to a *danwei*, and were thus constantly observed and supervised (Ebrey et al. 2006: 549). Following the communist ideal about equality among comrades the Communist Party extended the rights of women and redistributed property (Grasso et al. 2004: 148-149, 150; Ebrey et al. 2006: 548, 550).

The party also followed the example of the Soviet Union, and in 1953 China's First Five-Year Plan was launched (Grasso et al. 2004: 156). As in the Soviet Union, the emphasis was on the development of heavy industry in order to achieve the kind of industrialization that was needed to make China the great power it was planned to become. By the end of 1957, although the standard of living was improving, in Mao's mind the First Five-Year Plan had not achieved the desired effect on China's economy. (Ebrey et al. 2006: 555; Grasso et al. 2004: 176.) In addition, Mao's "Hundred Flowers Movement", aimed at getting the support of the intellectuals, backfired and lead to the "Anti-Rightist Campaign", resulting in organized repression and "re-education" of the assumed rightist intelligentsia (Grasso et al. 2004: 167, 171-172; Ebrey et al. 2006: 553, 555). "Re-education" in this case meant that the selected people were sent to hard labor work camps in the countryside. After these setbacks – the disappointing results of the First Five-Year Plan and the failing of rebuilding the relationship between the party and the intelligentsia – Mao decided to break free from the Soviet model and replaced the planned Second

Five-Year Plan with his own idea, the Great Leap Forward (Grasso et al. 2004: 175-179; Ebrey et al. 2006: 555).

The Great Leap Forward was, as referred to by Grasso et al. (2006: 178), Mao's "final phase of construction of his socialist utopia". At the base of the Great Leap Forward were the agricultural communes, where

> private garden plots were banned. Peasants were organized into quasi-military production brigades and referred to as fighters on the agricultural front. Peasant men were marched in military style to work on public works projects, while the women took over much of the fieldwork. Those between ages sixteen and thirty were drafted into the militia and spent long hours drilling. (Ebrey et al. 2006: 556.)

In addition to the boost in agriculture, steel production was attempted to be doubled by setting up "backyard steel furnaces", in which all possible steel was melted for the use of industry (Ebrey et al. 2006: 556; Grasso et al. 2004: 181-182). Due to the previous Anti-Rightist Campaign, however, there was a serious lack of needed technical and economical know-how, and the results of the meant-to-be technical and agricultural advancements were often less than desirable. The frantic working pace left the peasants and workers little or no time to sleep and eat, the soil was soon used up or spoiled by not using proper agricultural methods, and the gained steel was poor in quality (Ebrey et al. 2006: 556; Grasso et al. 2004: 186, 188). Eventually the poor harvests, accompanied with unfavorable natural occurrences such as droughts and floods, resulted in one of the worst famines in the history of the world (Grasso et al. 2004: 186, 192; Ebrey et al. 2006: 556). All in all, it has been estimated that between 1959 and 1962 around 30 million people in China died as a result of the famine (Ebrey et al. 2006: 556).

After the utter failure of the Great Leap Forward, Mao withdrew from his position as the head of state and was replaced by Liu Shaoqi. By 1962, however, Mao had become greatly concerned about the de-revolutionary, revisionist ways of the new leadership and, after gathering some allies, launched his endeavor to revolutionize the Chinese culture: the Cultural

Revolution (Grasso et al. 2004: 202, 208; Ebrey et al. 2006: 558-559). The first phase of the Cultural Revolution began in 1966, when students were organized into Red Guards, helping Mao expose revisionists. According to Ebrey et al. (2006: 559), the Red Guards soon roamed all over the country

> in their battle against things foreign or old. They invaded the homes of those with bad class backgrounds, "bourgeois tendencies," or connections to foreigners. Under the slogan of "destroy the four old things [old customs, habits, culture, and thinking]," they ransacked homes, libraries, and museums to find books and artwork to set on fire. (Ebrey et al. 2006: 559.)

Schools were closed, factory workers rebelled, and eventually industrial productivity fell drastically. These, however, were minor issues compared to the humanitarian losses encountered because of the rampage of the Red Guards: at least 400,000 "enemies of the people" were sent to work in the rural areas, and up to half a million people were killed or committed suicide (Grasso et al. 2004: 222; Ebrey et al. 2006: 562). Furthermore, according to Grasso et al. (2004: 222), "Hu Yaobang, general secretary of the Communist Party, estimated that between the Anti-Rightist Campaign of 1957, which prepared, the ground for the Cultural Revolution, and the conclusion of the upheaval, 100 million people became victims of its violence". In the summer of 1968 began the second phase of the Cultural Revolution, when Mao seized control over the Red Guard in order to prevent civil war. The main actors in the Cultural Revolution were thus sent to work in the countryside, while the army took over the cities (Ebrey et al. 2006: 562). Culture continued to be heavily controlled. In the 1970's Mao's health started deteriorating, and as he took less and less part in active decision making, China cautiously began to moderate its stance towards the outside world (Ebrey et al. 2006: 562). In 1976 Mao Zedong died and left the Communist Party to decide whether to stay on his path or to re-set its course.

During Mao's regime China was a secluded country with little contact to the outside world, apart from the Soviet Union and other communist countries. After Mao's death in 1976, China began to open up (e.g. Wenfeng and Gao

2008: 380; Grasso et al. 2004: 241). This was due to the reform policies of the new state leader, Deng Xiaoping, which even evoked the unofficial name "second revolution" (Grasso et al. 2004: 241). Deng's reforms were "dramatic reversals of Mao's policies during the Cultural Revolution", as stated by Grasso et al. (2004: 241), the greatest of which were the Four Modernizations: agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense. Grasso et al. (2004: 241) go on to explain the changes: "Mao demanded economic self-sufficiency, while Deng opened China to international trade, investment, and joint ventures – from capitalist and socialist nations alike". As a result the economic growth of China has escalated so that now, three decades later, China is one of the major factors in the international arena of economics and politics. Since 1976 the average incomes were quadrupled by the year 2000; the proportion of people living in poverty went from 33% in 1976 to 6.5% in 1995; and the life expectancy rose drastically (Ebrey et al. 2006: 567). Due to the economic recession in 2009 China even ended up offering a helping hand (of sorts) to the top dog, the United States of America (e.g. Hakala 2009; Zhou 2010). Such economic growth would not have been possible without substantial international business cooperation. China is a tempting business partner for the Western countries because of its vast recourses and cheap and abundant labor force (e.g. China Knowledge 2010). Manufacturing of goods is cheaper in China than it is in, for instance, most European countries, which has greatly benefited China. More and more foreign businesses settle down on Chinese soil, bringing with them foreign employers and employees (China Knowledge 2010).

Although the ways of China have become rather capitalist, the Communist Party remains in power to this day. While things have improved after Mao Zedong's death, the government control over the Chinese people has continued to be strong and uncontested. This along with other features of Chinese society, are introduced in the next subsection, alongside with some cultural features that are relevant to this study.

### 2.1.2.  Culture and society: features and changes

As was mentioned above, the Chinese culture goes back 5,000 years. To try and cover every aspect of such a historical culture would certainly be madness, and therefore only a few elements of the Chinese culture and society are presented in this subsection. First, however, a brief review of how the Chinese society has changed since the days of Mao Zedong. The Communist Party certainly did not die with Mao, but simply changed its ways while still holding its iron grip of the Chinese people. As Grasso et al. (2004: 321) point out, the Chinese leadership "is convinced that giving in to the demands of any group it does not control will undermine the political monopoly they feel is necessary to maintain social order". Perhaps the Chinese leadership is even right in assuming that establishing democracy among almost 1.5 billion people without falling into chaos would be impossible, but the chosen methods of control over the people of China are nonetheless less than desirable.

Propaganda was the chosen form of social control in Mao's China, and it remains an important instrument for the government today. It seems that the most effective form of propaganda is the re-telling of history. As Grasso et al. (2004: 321-322) explain,

> the propaganda campaigns begin in primary school, continue right through college, and are reinforced by the media. China's university students in their early twenties have little knowledge of the Great Leap Forward of the Cultural Revolution, which are largely ignored in the schools. What happened in Tiananmen Square more than a decade ago, when they were at most ten years old, is a vague, distant memory. Current university students appear to agree with the government claim that it is protecting the social order when it curbs freedom of expression, represses dissenters like the Falun Gong, and imposes the death penalty on a massive scale. China's youth are interested in the United States, and often want to study there, but they see it as a bully, trying to push their country around. (Grasso et al. 2004: 321-322.)

The muting down of mistakes and human rights violations done by the Chinese government both in the past and the present, as presented above, is one of the most important ways of maintaining a strong feeling of nationalism among the

Chinese people. As mentioned in the previous citation, the most significant examples of this are the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and the Tiananmen massacre, all of which the young people nowadays are mostly oblivious. In addition to this sort of covering up, the Chinese government is also prone to editing the history as well as current events so that China appears to be bullied, so to speak, whereas the capitalist, Western world is presented in the role of the bully. The most formidable of such cases must be those of Tibet and Taiwan, and the latest took place when the Nobel Prize Committee awarded Liu Xiaobo, a Chinese dissident and political prisoner, with the Nobel Peace Prize "for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China" (Nobel 2010). Announcing the award outraged the Chinese government, to whom Liu Xiaobo is a convicted criminal. This was followed by the Chinese government's demands for other countries' representatives not to take part in the Nobel ceremony. (E.g. Tuohinen 2010; AP-HS 2010.)

Due to strict censorship, the Chinese people living in China are not likely to get access to other than the Chinese versions of past and present events. This is likely to change only if one moves abroad to work or study, which again requires education. When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, less than 20% of the Chinese people were literate (De Mente 2009: 123). The situation did not improve much during Mao's regime, for it was "more important to be red than expert" (Ebrey et al. 2006: 572). In 1977, however, education was reformed, and as it became possible to study abroad, the studying of foreign languages increased drastically (Ebrey et al. 2006: 572). In the 1980s most schools started charging fees, which suddenly brought up severe inequalities in Chinese society. By the end of the 1990's also universities were charging fees, making (especially higher) education available mostly to the richer parts of society (Ebrey et al. 2006: 572). Today, to those to whom higher education is available, it is the means to get a desired job and make money, and for some to go abroad.

Education in China is theoretically equally available for both women and men. In practice, however, many families, especially in the rural areas, invest

more in the education of boys than girls. While the communist rhetoric of the equality of men and women remains, the reality has not quite followed up to it (Ebrey et al. 2006: 573). Although a significant percentage of Chinese employees today are women, it is also noticed that in the hiring processes men are preferred, while women are the first ones to be fired (De Mente 2009: 94; Ebrey et al. 2006: 573). The differences between the two genders are seen in other fields of life as well, as in the patrilineality of families.

Traditionally it has been a custom in China that the newly married couples move to live with or very near the husband's family. Practices such as this and coerced marriages were discouraged during Mao's regime (Ebrey et al. 2006: 575), but old habits have proven to die hard, especially in the countryside. According to De Mente (2009: 112), "at the beginning of the 21$^{st}$ century, arranged marriages were still a common practice in rural farming areas of China, with elements that had not changed since ancient times, including families 'buying' brides for their sons". Although such customs are viewed as problems to be solved by the government and other agencies, the marriage arrangements of young Chinese remain heavily regulated by the older generations (De Mente 2009: 112). While marriages today are not necessarily arranged *per se*, the approval of the family is imperative. In the urban areas of China the situation is gradually changing. The young Chinese are living a time of increasing Western influence, and are adapting accordingly. While the young generations of today's urban China are still obligated by the "indebtedness to parents" (Milagros et al. 1995 as cited by Logan and Bian 1999: 1254) that is characteristic of the Chinese family-orientedness, the generational gap is becoming more and more evident. As the social restraints imposed on the dating and marriage rituals of young people are slowly diminishing, marriages of convenience are being replaced by marriages of love and companionship (De Mente 2009: 112-113).

As can be detected, the family pressure plays an important role in the lives of the Chinese people. There is, however, another feature of the Chinese culture that directs the everyday behavior of the Chinese people even more: the concept

of "face", *mianzi*. According to De Mente (2009: 159), *mianzi* can be translated as "personal honor", and is

> broken down into four basic categories:
> One that refers to the good reputation that one gets by avoiding mistakes and making what turns out to be wise decisions.
> One that covers all of the actions one takes to "give face" to others by showing them respect and paying them compliments.
> One that refers to others giving *you* face by treating you respectfully and saying complimentary things about you.
> And finally, the "face" that refers to having actions or events that are embarrassing or damaging to you become known to others people – in this case referring to loss of face. (De Mente 2009: 159; emphasis in the original)

To summarize what De Mente writes, the concept of *mianzi*, or "face", consists of how one is viewed by others, how one is treated by others, and how one presents oneself. Lockett (as referred to by Buckley et al. 2006: 276) defines *mianzi* as "the recognition by others of an individual's social standing and position". Thus, "losing face" means losing one's social standing and reputation, and is avoided by all necessary means.

Understanding the importance of *mianzi* and reputation in China is one of the key factors in the relationship between China and the Western world (Buckley et al. 2006: 277; De Mente 2009: 159). However, understanding the same cultural code is not of much use without a common language. As China is making the effort of achieving this by emphasizing the learning and teaching of English, the next section is aimed at clarifying the role and position of the English language in China.

### 2.1.3. The English language in China

Currently the English language has a strong position in the country's education system in China. Ever since 1977, when the 'reform and open-door' strategy was included with English language education, English has been an increasingly important part of the modernization of China (Feng 2009: 86), as

well as offering "individual learners access to new socioeconomic opportunities" (Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 386). As already mentioned in chapter 1, China today has the largest English-learning population in the world. Learning English is emphasized in schools from an early stage, and the process is brought to a conclusion with the official English proficiency test being linked with the university or college degrees. As Feng (2009: 89) states, "the CET 4 and CET 6 certificates, […] are as important as the graduation certificate for university students". Testimonies such as this give a clear picture of how highly the English language education in China really is valued.

The CET, College English Test, is the main means of defining the level of English proficiency among the university students. However, the proficiency requirements begin much earlier. In 2001, China's Ministry of Education presented new English Curriculum Standards, ECSs, by which the pupils are evaluated throughout their schooling (Feng 2009: 87). The levels of required English proficiency are defined by the Ministry of Education (as translated and presented by Feng 2009: 88) as follows: level 2 for primary school leavers, level 5 for lower secondary school leavers (end of compulsory education), and level 8 for senior secondary school leavers. In higher education the CETs are in use, and in order to get a desired job the student needs to pass at least CET 4, ideally CET 6 (Feng 2009: 89). The evaluation system is obviously highly stressful for the students, which is why the link between the CET certificate and the university graduation certificate has been officially claimed as "inappropriate" (Feng 2009: 89), to no actual effect.

As has now been established, the requirements for English proficiency in China are rather rigid. In order to gain the proper level in English in an environment most often lacking in possibilities to have contact with the language in everyday life (for example through television or contact with foreigners), the English classes in school play the key role in the pupils' English-learning. According to Wolff (2010: 54), there are 1,000,000 Chinese, and 250,000 foreign teachers of English in China. Whatever the true number is, it is clear that there is an immense amount of people working on the task of

making the Chinese people proficient in English. However, there seems to be more effort than results in this endeavor, due to the level of English teaching in China. The problem was noticed already in the 1980s, when the State Education Commission conducted a large-scale survey among secondary school teachers and students around China (Hu 2004: 12). The survey discovered that, after several years of learning English, the students' English proficiency was alarmingly low. Another discovery was that a majority of the teachers had no qualifications whatsoever for acting as a teacher. Since then the balance has been reversed, and only a minority of teachers lack professional training. However, although the pedagogical side of the problem has been taken care of, the language proficiency of the teachers themselves remain a problem. This unfortunate reality is noticed also by Wolff (2010: 53), who rather critically claims that

> for many Chinese teachers, there is only one English – the imagined 'Standard English' that exists only in the minds of Chinese scholars who stand before their Chinese students and instruct them, in Mandarin, to 'master standard English.' The reason for instruction in Mandarin is because the Chinese scholars' English is too poor to teach in the target language. (Wolff 2010: 53.)

The idea mentioned by Wolff of "mastering standard English" has brought forth plans of bilingual teaching in Chinese metropolises (e.g. Hu 2004: 18; Feng 2009: 91). The problems in such an enterprise would be numerous, and among them would surely be the lack of teachers who are fluent enough in English to actually use it constantly while teaching (Hu 2004: 18).

According to Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 384), the Chinese students are usually viewed by researchers as reserved, reticent and passive, while the classroom surroundings are mostly teacher-centered and grammar-focused. The most significant problem in English language teaching (ELT) in China seems to be a kind of mechanical learning, or learning for grades and not true understanding. As Wolff (2010: 54) points out, "the goal of universities and colleges throughout China is to have students pass national English competency

examinations such as TEM 4, CET 4 and CET 6". Passing any of these tests, Wolff (2010: 54) continues, has hardly anything to do with real language competency, but the pass rates are nevertheless "the exclusive focus of administrative attention and false pride". This, again, is partly the result of Chinese employers regarding the passing of CET 6 as evidence of proficiency in English (Wolff 2010: 54). This type of learning for grades is what Edwards (1985: 146) calls "positive and instrumental", as opposed to "favorable and integrative". Language learning in school, Edwards (1985: 146) continues, is instrumental and not integrative when it is treated as "an unreal and artificial business in which communication is subordinated to an appreciation of language as a purely academic subject". This, as can be detected, is the case in China with the main emphasis in the English language learning being on the passing of the CETs.

The competition in China today in the fields of both education and work is ruthless, and the only way of measuring success or competence is by exams and grades. For educators such as Feng (2009: 90), the instrumental value given to English in China is connected to "accessing the knowledge of sciences and technology in that language in order to facilitate economic development and nation building in general". For a university student, however, achieving access to a desired job requires having proof of competence in English, meaning the CET 6 certificate. According to Wolff (2010: 54), this means that the students are able to "read and comprehend basic English at the American 3rd grade public primary school level but they lack listening skills, writing skills and speaking skills". Hence, from the point of view of a university student – excluding, perhaps, those majoring in English – the value of the English language as defined by Feng may still seem rather utopian.

In China one of the major problems contributing to the overall poor level of English is the lack of possibilities to practice it. Most English classes are given by Chinese instructors speaking Mandarin Chinese due to their own incompetence in English (Wolff 2010: 53, 54, 55-56). Many universities, including Guangzhou University where this study was performed, have a

weekly English Corner, in which the students gather together to speak English (Wolff 2010: 55). However, at least in the English Corner at Guangzhou University the English conversation is almost entirely relying on the participation of foreign exchange students. Discussion groups that do not include foreigners either sit quietly or speak in Chinese. In groups with foreigners most Chinese students still sit quietly, too shy to say anything in English. Wolff (2010: 55) lists the prevailing assumptions in China that, in his opinion, has lead to such an outcome: "1. you must master English, 2. Chinglish is no good, 3. you can only make your English better speaking with a native English speaker, 4. everyone in China must learn English". These unrealistic demands and assumptions have resulted in no one mastering English, and hardly anyone speaking with native English speakers because of fear of losing face on account of not mastering English (see page 20 for clarification). Although the situation nowadays may indeed be as bad as depicted before by Wolff, it has not gone unnoticed by the Chinese authorities. Changes to the English curriculum are implemented, especially to improve the now lacking communicative skills of the students (Zhu 2003: 36).

Even if the current ELT situation in China – extensive efforts with little results – was successfully corrected, the spread of English language in China would not be a development without problems. According to Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 386), the spread of the English language in China is strongly linked to the dramatic social and political changes that have taken place in China during the last few decades. Currently the national emphasis on the English language education is causing social and political problems of ethnic nature. In fact, according to Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 386), "many academic researchers are worried about whether the existing linguistic and ethnic diversity is seriously at risk in light of the national zeal for learning English". There are also concerns about the influence of the spread of English language on Chinese culture and society, as gathered by Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 386): "as China has a long sociocultural history and tradition, it becomes a huge challenge for us to deal with the existing set of Sociocultural practices, whose integrity may have been

threatened by the importation of ideologies and sociocultural practices following the promotion of the English language". Indeed, many policy makers are trying to promote the Chinese language to regain the main emphasis on language education, while some educators fear that the English language threatens their native language and culture (Feng 2009). In order to clarify the relationship between the Chinese people and the Chinese culture, the following section introduces the concept of cultural identity, inspects how cultural identity has been molded in China before and during globalization, and how the Chinese people perceive the notion of the self.

## 2.2.    Cultural identity, globalization, and the self

The key theoretical term for this study is cultural identity. The subject of identity – and cultural identity to be more particular – is widely researched within different scientific fields; anthropology, psychology and sociology among others. In this study the approach on identity is based mainly on the works of Stuart Hall, a noted researcher of identity. Hall (e.g. 1992, 2002, 2003) has dealt with the changes of cultural identities from many different angles, including the effects of cultural diaspora and globalization. As a concept, cultural identity is one of many interpretations, and not without contradiction. For example, Hall (2003: 233) theorizes

> two ways of reflecting on 'cultural identity': first, identity understood as collective, shared history among individuals affiliated by race or ethnicity that is considered to be fixed or stable; and second, identity understood as unstable, metamorphic, and even contradictory – an identity marked by multiple points of similarities as well as differences. (Hall 2003: 233.)

In the case of China, Hall's first description of identity represents the "official" Chinese identity, meaning the fixed cultural identity that the Chinese government promotes and enforces. The second description, on the other hand,

represents the more flexible and realistic cultural identity that is shaped and reshaped by individuals and how they experience China and the world. It is worth noting, however, that in China the first kind is the dominant one, and often suppresses the second kind (see section 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). Hall (2003: 236) also emphasizes that "cultural identity … is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past". These descriptions of cultural identities' instability seem highly relevant in terms of this particular study. Young Chinese university students, who are the target group of this study, are indeed living between the past and the future, constantly reshaping their cultural and self identities. However, the situation is the same all over the world – people are just looking at it from different angles depending on where they are from, and from what kind of social background. The current rate of technological advancement has brought us to a point where resisting change inevitably means falling behind. Globalization, technological and economical growth (or the incapability of it), and ever increasing intercultural communication are all parts of the current on-going re-shaping of cultural identities. This is the case especially in China, where the vast economical, educational and social differences between the urban and the rural areas inevitably mean great changes for the former, and falling behind for the latter.

However, the situation in China has not always been as divided as it is nowadays. During Mao Zedong's dictatorial regime from 1949 to 1976, the communist rule was not to be questioned, and for a long time it was the main influence on the Chinese people's cultural identity (Ebrey et al. 2006: 548-549; see section 2.1.1). Mao's unscrupulous rule left little room for sentimental preserving of China's ancient cultural status, and demanded solely unity and homogeneity; tradition was declared as weakness (Ebrey et al. 2006: 547). During the rise of communism and the Cultural Revolution the Chinese people were forced to acquire a new identity. Margaretha Balle-Petersen (1988, as summarized by Honko 1988: 19)

> compares the internalization of an identity with falling in love and religious conversion. … the acquisition of an identity is something 'new', a 'rupture' that restructures the entire world, makes the individual oppose what he previously was part of and adopt a new way of life. Social movements of a religious and profane nature are 'highly normative and imperative … they give people a place in a certain order of things and thereby define a clear cultural identity. The message of the movement speaks directly to you as an individual: it tells you who you are'. (Balle-Petersen 1988, as summarized by Honko: 19.)

What Balle-Petersen says here about the nature of cultural identities defined by the state offers one explanation as to how it is possible for social movements such as the Great Leap Forward or the Cultural Revolution to take place and engulf a huge nation such as the Chinese. To further explain the phenomenon, Balle-Petersen (1988: 36) goes on as if describing China in particular:

> Most social movements work for long-term goals. To bring about the desired ideal state of society will require a long and hard shared struggle. For the outsider the ideas are Utopian, and unsuccessful actions on the part of the movement also seem to confirm this. But the new reality does not stand or fall on the strength of the amount of success achieved by the concrete forms of action in objective terms. The struggle has a value in itself. It is an affirmation. ...
>
> It is not the power aspect, but the experiential, environmental and identity aspects that are central to an understanding of how people can be so strongly motivated and let themselves be so completely absorbed by something which for the outsider is nothing more than castles in the air. (Balle-Petersen 1988: 36.)

In other words, social movements, such as described above by Balle-Petersen, are possible because the need for change encourages people to believe that the utopian state envisioned by the state leaders can and *will* be possible, if they only surrender themselves wholly to the cause. With the mix of successful propaganda and sincere belief the Chinese people were made to abandon everything old and traditional, redefine themselves as what was necessary for the cause of the Communist Party. After Mao's death in 1976 China started to open up, and again the Chinese people were faced with a whole new world order (see section 2.1.1). From communism to capitalism with newly revived traditional Chinese culture, the Chinese people seem to have to be constantly

reshaping their cultural identities according to the political, cultural, economical and technological atmosphere of the country. In addition, of course, today the on-going globalization is setting the need to define the Chinese cultural identity not only within China, but in relation to the whole world.

As gathered by Blommaert (2010: 13), "the term *globalization* is most commonly used as shorthand for the intensified flows of capital, goods, people, images and discourses around the globe" (emphasis in the original). Globalization is making everything available for anyone with the means to purchase it. Many researchers in the cultural sphere are prone to view the effects of globalization on cultural identity in a rather negative light: "typically, it has been associated with the destruction of cultural identities, victims of the accelerating encroachment of a homogenized, westernized, consumer culture" (Tomlinson 2003: 269). When looking at the Chinese university students, the subjects of this study, Tomlinson's notion seems justified. As Grasso et al. (2004: 321) state, "to outside observers they seem Westernized. They frequent the discos […] flock to internet chat rooms, wear blue jeans and Reebok boots, and call each other on cell phones". These, however, are merely what the eye meets.

While people are travelling further and further, the world is getting smaller and smaller. After all, whatever one desires, it is most probably no more than a few clicks away. Does all this mean, then, that ethnic and national cultural identities are disappearing? This seems hard to believe. Rather I would agree with Tomlinson (2003: 270-271) when he claims that "cultural identity is not likely to be the easy prey of globalization", but that "identity is not in fact merely some fragile communal-psychic attachment, but a considerable dimension of *institutionalized* social life in modernity. Particularly in the dominant form of *national identity*, it is the product of deliberate cultural construction and maintenance" (emphasis in the original). In other words, identities – especially cultural and national – are constructed and maintained to the point where they become almost like institutions; fixed, rarely changed ideas declaring that *this* is what it is like to be Chinese (or any other

nationality). To return again to the Chinese university students discussed above, despite their favoring of Western brands and products, the university students still tend to support China's "official" stance towards the West (Grasso et al. 2004: 321-322). This is manifested by overall negative attitudes towards the West, as well as increasing fear of the diminishing of the Chinese culture.

Indeed, globalization has evoked a new wave of localization (Tomlinson 2003), which manifests itself for example in the emphasizing of the importance of buying domestic food and products (at least in Finland, that is), thus supporting domestic trade and local production of goods. Before globalization had brought all the goods in the world in our supermarkets, and domestic was more the norm than the specialty, there was hardly any reason to put emphasis on the locality of goods. On the contrary; if nowadays in Finland the Finnish products cost double or triple the amount that an equivalent that has been made in China does, it used to be the other way around. In China, on the other hand, the foreign (or, to be precise, Western) products are both more expensive and of better quality than the Chinese equivalents, and therefore the locality of products used is mainly a matter of convenience and necessity, not that of quality awareness or support for local producers. It seems that the effect of such difference in appreciating locality is the opposite as well: while in Finland the cultural identity for many may be enforced by the quality of local products, in China the quality of Western products seem to cause people to question their cultural identity. However, this questioning, instead of automatically resulting in the loss of Chinese culture and cultural identity, can also result in kind of reinvention of the traditional Chinese culture. Indeed, Tomlinson (2003) has argued that globalization has been one of the most (if not *the* most) significant forces in creating and proliferating cultural identity. To be sure: is it not globalization that has made people truly consider their cultural origins?

Nations change; people migrate to foreign countries, and their children become citizens of two cultures, if not two countries. Many of the European and North American metropolises can now be labeled under one category: multicultural. As people around the world have come to experience during the

last few decades, the spreading of cultural diaspora on one hand creates inter- and multiculturalism, increasing tolerance and understanding towards the previously unknown. On the other hand, though, it can bring forth enhanced expressions of cultural identity (e.g. through emphasizing of religious doctrines that are normal in the country of origin, or through negative outbursts of national identity), strengthen cultural and national stereotypes and encourage racism and bigotry. In China multiculturalization and internationalization are still taking small steps. Those who are educated and live in the developed urban areas are finding more and more possibilities to expand their knowledge and encounter other cultures and nationalities. While the developments towards internationalization in China are on most parts welcomed, the changes are taking place so quickly that fears of losing the Chinese culture and languages are arising (see section 2.1.3).

However, as Hall (2003) emphasizes, cultural identity is prone to change. For an individual moving to a foreign country and a foreign culture this change is sure to become a current matter, for not to change would under these circumstances certainly mean alienation and social exclusion: "an individual's identity is formed and maintained in the course of interaction with others" (Robbins 1973: 1202). It is easy to imagine that the struggle of acquiring a new culture while preserving the old is not effortless. This is precisely the situation with which the young educated Chinese are tackling with today. Although there is great pressure to learn new ways to cope in the world outside China, there is also pressure to represent the profound Chinese culture. As Lauri Honko (1988: 16) points out, "the tradition-ecological persistence of frames of mind and structures of behavior is … at the heart of cultural identity". But people and systems of people are adaptable, as Honko (1988: 16) continues: "Persistence need not concern singular traits and the system is flexible, able to adopt and adapt new features, new forms of identity expression without letting the basic collective identity system disintegrate or vanish".

As mentioned previously, adapting is required of those who stay put as well. Cultural identities based on clearly defined ethnic, racial, linguistic,

religious and national similarities (Hall 1992: 274) have come to a cross-roads, and nowadays it is maybe more reasonable to consider cultural identities by different generations than by other factors. In China, a country that is at the moment changing rapidly and really stepping out in to the world, this generational gap is perhaps more evident than in many Western countries. After all, China's history as a closed up communist country has left the older generations without any contact to the outside world and its technological advancement, among other traits. For the younger generations, as the target group of this study, however, contact with foreign cultural traits and people is constantly available, not to mention the Internet with all its perks. The generational gap based on such matters is, of course, true only in the richer urban areas of China, and the situation in the rural areas is in many cases very different (De Mente 2009: 112).

According to Hall (1992: 276), identity is formed in interaction between the self and the society. In China the effect of the society is traditionally much stronger than the effect of the self. Chinese society is a vertical one, following strict power-based and hierarchical rules (De Mente 2009: 35). The society comes first in relation to the individual, so much so that this guideline makes up an important part of the Chinese cultural identity. However, the young Chinese of today are increasingly fascinated by the individualism and independence of the Western people. While they still greatly respect their parents and what is expected of them by their parents, they are perhaps the most important link in the chain of changes making China more individualistic. (See section 2.1.2.) This change is described by Hall (1992: 274), who explains that

> the old identities which stabilized the social world for so long are in decline, giving rise to new identities and fragmenting the modern individual as a unified subject. This so-called 'crisis of identity' is seen as part of a wider process of change which is dislocating the central structures and processes of modern societies and undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world. (Hall 1992: 274.)

The fragmenting of the cultural identity (Hall 1992: 274) is at play amongst the Chinese university students, who are trying to balance out between the traditional Chinese and the modern Western-based identities. This process includes the redefining of the position of the individual in relation to the society.

Different peoples have different ideas and perspectives about the importance and role of the self in relation to society. In the West the prevailing conception is that the individual comes first, while in many other cultures the individual is subordinate to society; the needs of a single person are irrelevant when it comes to the well-being and preserving of the whole society. China is a textbook example of the latter. In a country where the leaders follow the "Asian values", demanding that individuals put the state's rights before their own, the individual is expected to work for society, not the other way around (Sen 1997: 10). Before themselves people are accountable to the country, to their parents, to their employer, to their teachers, and so forth. This perception of the self as a subordinate to society creates a great deal of pressure especially for the young people trying to advance in life. The pressure for success is reflected directly in to the schooling system in China, resulting in a frenzied chase of grades rather than understanding (see section 2.1.3).

Despite the prevailing values of society, no culture is void of the notion of self: "… a conception of self is a prerequisite to human social life, […] a conception of self is necessary to orient the individual to others and to his physical environment" (Robbins 1973: 1202). A society's attitude and perception of the self is in direct connection to the intercultural relations of its people. Different approaches to the self and to individualism are in many cases at the core of intercultural misunderstandings. In the West people are used to independence to the level that every person "makes their own luck", so to speak, and therefore the customs of more society- or family-oriented cultures, such as the Chinese, often seem unbearable to us. On the other hand, to people coming from those cultures the Western individualism may come across as detached, cold and uncaring.

> The nature of the self, considered in its conceptual component, is a culturally identifiable variable. Just as different people entertain various beliefs about the nature of the universe, they likewise differ in their ideas about the nature of the self. And just as we have discovered that notions about the nature of beings and powers existent in the universe involve assumptions that are directly relevant to an understanding of the behavior of the individual in a given society, we must likewise assume that the individual's self-image and his interpretation of his own experience cannot be divorced from the concept of self that is characteristic of his society. (Hallowell 1955: 76.)

What Hallowell suggests here is that while the individuals' beliefs and notions about the universe affect directly the individuals' behavior, similarly their beliefs and notions are affected directly by the society in which they live. Same goes for the notion of the self. In the case of China it seems that "the individual's self-image and his interpretation of his own experience" and "the concept of the self that is characteristic of his society" are slowly beginning to depart. Before delving into that, however, the next section presents some previous research done on the subject of English language in China.

## 2.3.    Previous studies

Since China is one of the hot topics of the day, due to its rapid gaining of power in world economy, also the role, effects, and use of English in China has been rather widely researched. Most of the studies concerning English in China approach the subject from a linguistic or educational point of view (e.g. Chang 2006; Lam 2002; Zhang 2002), and not from the cultural and sociological perspective, as this study does. However, one study concerning identity and the English language in China was found: Gao et al. (2005) have studied the "Self-identity changes and English learning among Chinese undergraduates". While the topic of the study is very similar to that of this study, there are some notable differences in the execution and nature of the two.

The study by Gao et al. (2005) is a quantitative research, the subjects of which were 2,278 university students from 30 universities all around China. The study was conducted by a questionnaire in which self-identity changes were measured by a 5-point Likert scale (Gao et al. 2005: 40). The focus of the study is, as can be detected, the subjects' identities as language learners and multilingual individuals, not their cultural identities. The effects of the English language are therefore not perceived from a cultural point of view, but from an individual point of view. The reason for their choice of focus is explained by Gao et al. (2005: 44) as follows:

> The prominence of self-confidence change as a learning outcome might reflect characteristics of Chinese EFL context, as distinguished from ESL contexts: limited exposure to the target culture, yet very high value attached to the target language. In such a context, the impact of language learning on learners' perception of their own competence was greater than that on their cultural identities. (Gao et al. 2005: 44.)

Nevertheless, the study offers some interesting views on how the English language affects the Chinese learners. The measured types of self-identity changes in the study were self-confidence change, additive change, subtractive change, productive change, split change, and zero change (Gao et al. 2005: 40-42). Without further explanation of the categories, the results of the study reported the most significant change in the self-confidence of the participants (Gao et al. 2005: 44). Unlike previous studies tackling similar issues, Gao et al. (2005: 44) "viewed self-confidence as an outcome of English learning", and not the other way around. As their major findings Gao et al. (2005: 50) reported that "learners' perception of their own competence was the part of identity affected most by English learning", and that "productive bilingualism" was possible for an ordinary student to reach. The latter finding meant that "the command of the target language and that of the native language positively reinforce each other" (Gao et al. 2005: 42). As a factor in the shaping of the self-identity of the Chinese students, it seems that learning the English language can work as an enabling and empowering tool.

In addition to the identity-related study by Gao et al., there has been a rather extensive amount of research done about language attitudes in Hong Kong (e.g. Flowerdew et al. 1998; Lai 2005; Axler et al. 1998; Tsui and Bunton 2000), a topic slightly similar to that of this study. In these studies the focus is, as mentioned, on attitudes towards English and Chinese languages (mainly Cantonese) in Hong Kong. Some studies concerning language attitudes are done in Mainland China as well (e.g. Kalmar et al. 1987; Zhou 2000), but in these cases English is one of the considered languages. Although such attitudes do not directly concern the subject of cultural identity, one can draw some conclusions based on them about the nature of the cultural identity of the target groups.

As an example of one of the studies about language attitudes towards English and Chinese in Hong Kong, I will now present the study conducted by John Flowerdew, David Li and Lindsay Miller at the City University of Hong Kong in 1997. Named "Attitudes towards English and Cantonese among Hong Kong Chinese university lecturers", the study tackles the sociolinguistic tensions created by the former British colonial regime in Hong Kong. Flowerdew et al. (1997) interviewed several university lecturers to find out their attitudes towards English teaching policies in Hong Kong, and more specifically their attitudes towards using English as a medium of teaching instead of Cantonese. Cantonese is a spoken variety of Chinese that differs from Mandarin Chinese (Putonghua), the standard used on the mainland (Flowerdew et al. 1998: 201). The same character-based writing system, Modern Standard Chinese, is used in both Mandarin Chinese and Cantonese. However, in Hong Kong the same traditional characters are used as in Taiwan, while in mainland China a system of simplified characters is in use (Flowerdew et al. 1998: 201).

In their study Flowerdew et al. (1998: 202) mention that while English is the language mostly used in business, government and education in Hong Kong, Cantonese is the one used in informal social situations and is "the language of ethnic solidarity". At the City University of Hong Kong the official language of instruction is English, although great majority of the students speak

Cantonese as their mother tongue. In their study Flowerdew et al. (1998: 214) found out that while most of the lecturers are in favor of the English-medium policy, they think that it should be applied flexibly and with the students' language capabilities in mind. They also stressed that English in Hong Kong is perceived as being very important for Hong Kong's international affairs, but that the language connected with the culture and ethnicity of the Hong Kong people is indisputably Cantonese.

Although there has not been much research done in Mainland China about the language attitudes including the English language, the teaching and learning of English in China has been studied abundantly (e.g. Yu 2001; Bolton and Tong 2002; Wu 2001). As a summary of these, Wang Wenfeng and Xuesong Gao (2008) have collected a review of selected research on English language education in China. The review consists of 81 papers in 24 international journals published between 2001 and 2006. The selected papers cover research from the areas of "the linguistic situations and culture of learning in China in relation to English language education, language policy and planning, developments in English curricula and teaching methodologies and the impact of these developments on the learning of English in bilingual and multilingual circumstances, as well as the professional development of English teachers in China" (Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 380). The review shows that the research done in this particular field is, although extensive, rather elitist in nature, concentrating mostly on the economically advanced urban areas, and ignoring the poorer rural areas. Thus, the majority of research done on the matter does not give an exhaustive picture of the ELT (English language teaching) situation in mainland China.

Because of this elitist view of the research done, Wenfeng and Gao are concerned throughout the review about the effects of the negligence that follows. Referring to Zhou (2003), Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 383) emphasize that what is often forgotten when speaking of China in general, is that "China is a multilingual and multidialectal context with 56 ethnic groups, among which the Han Chinese speak Putonghua [Mandarin Chinese] besides their local

dialects and the 55 minority groups speaks as many as 80-120 languages". To most of the Han people English is the second language, while to the minority groups English is only the third language, Mandarin Chinese being the second (Lam 2007, as referred to by Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 387). The ethnic minorities in China consist of roughly 100 million people, most of whom live in the rural, underdeveloped parts of the country (Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 387). The review therefore notes that the research on the subject tends to treat the Chinese English language learners as if it was a homogenous group, leaving the people with ethnic minority background mostly without mention. However, it is also noted that, taking into consideration the huge amount of the Chinese people as well as the multiple ethnic minorities, it is understandably difficult for the policymakers to come up with an exhaustive national language curriculum (Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 386).

The review also takes into consideration the Chinese variation of the English language. This 'China English', 'Chinese English' or even 'Chinglish' has been widely researched in the field of world Englishes (e.g. Qiang and Wolff 2003a, 2003b; Kirkpatrick and Zhichang 2002; Qiong 2004; Henry 2010). The status of English as a lingua franca has been criticized as being merely linguistic imperialism, a more subtle continuation to the British imperialist regime (e.g. Crystal 2003: 59). To make English more approachable to the non-native speakers around the world, researchers have started to promote the above mentioned 'world Englishes' as variations of English as valid as the so-called 'inner circle' Englishes – that is, the American, British, Australian and New Zealand Englishes (Crystal 2003: 60). Since China has the largest English learning population in the world today (e.g. He and Li 2009), the variation of 'China English' is viewed as possibly being a considerable step outside the borders of the 'inner circle' Englishes. Philipson (1992, as referred to by Wenfeng and Gao 2008: 392) even suggests that the way China is utilizing English for its own purposes might be a sign of the gradual ending of linguistic imperialism.  As Wenfeng and Gao (2008: 392) elaborate, "although the spread of English might have been closely associated with global politics,

the rise of China can help create an equilibrium that prevents the ELT profession from being tainted with supporting particular dominant powers or cultures". What they are saying is, that with its size and growing global influence and importance, China can help turn English from a remnant of the colonial powers into a neutral lingua franca.

As can be seen, the English language in China is a topic that has been researched in great length and from several aspects. While studies focusing on matters of identity remain in the marginal, the ELT and English language learning situation in China have been popular topics. Although such studies are reportedly limited in their scope (focusing mostly on urban areas), they repeatedly point out the several problems that exist in the ELT situation in China. Despite the problems, the studies presented above about identity and attitude related issues testify that learning the English language is mainly viewed in a positive light by the Chinese learners and teachers, and is attributed with highly instrumental values. As a conclusion to their review, Wenfeng and Gao (2008:391) suggest, for example, that more research be done on the subject of ELT in China considering the cultural and ethnic identities of the Chinese people(s), and their relationship to the spreading of the English language. The following chapter delves into how this study attempts to contribute to the field of research concerning the English language in China.

## 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this chapter the methods with which this study has been realized are discussed. First the aims of this study are explained along with the research questions. The second section deals with the methodological framework, ethnography, which is outlined briefly. To go on with the actual study, the third section introduces the data and the participants of this study, including the

demographics of the target group. This information was collected in the first part of the questionnaire (see appendix 1). Instead of going through it in chapter 4, *Analysis*, with the rest of the questionnaire answers, it seems more meaningful to give the personal information of the informants here in order to give the reader an idea about who they are and of what kind of background they come from. Also the selection criteria for the target group is discussed, deliberating the reasons behind narrowing the group down to Chinese university level English learners. Following the introduction of the data and the participants of the study, the fourth section includes the description of the methods of data collection: where, when and how the data collection was executed. Derived from the problems arising in collecting the data, a critical view on what aspects might compromise the reliability and validity of this study is the subject of the fifth section. Especially the language problems encountered while collecting the data are taken into account, as well as the researcher's presence in the interview situations. To conclude the realization of the study, the final section of this chapter is about the methods with which the data was analyzed.

## 3.1.    Research questions and aims

The wide subject of language and cultural identity in China can be divided into numerous sub-topics. In this particular study the focus is on the effects of the English language on the cultural identity of Chinese university students. The idea of one thing affecting another holds in itself the assumption of change; the English language affects the Chinese cultural identity – hence the cultural identity of Chinese people is changing. This, of course, remains an assumption until proven otherwise, but works as a hypothesis for this study nonetheless. In addition, it helps clarifying what is meaningful for this study: change, and how

and why it occurs. To test the validity of the hypothesis, I have fashioned the research questions for this study as follows:

- Do Chinese university students feel that the increasing need for and use of the English language in China has somehow affected the Chinese culture and people?
  - ➢ If so, how? Is the change experienced as a positive or a negative one?
  - ➢ Are the changes affecting in some ways their cultural identity as Chinese people?
- Have the Chinese university students' own attitudes towards the Chinese culture and language changed due to their increased knowledge of the English language and the Western culture(s)?
  - ➢ If so, how? Is the change experienced as a positive or a negative one?
  - ➢ Are the changes affecting in some ways their cultural identity as Chinese people?
  - ➢ Also; have their increased knowledge of the English language and the Western culture changed their attitudes towards the English language and the Western culture(s)? If so, how?

The main aim of the study is to find out how the informants' attitudes towards language and culture have changed under the influence of the English language, and how those attitudes shape their cultural identity as modern, educated Chinese. One of the main ways of achieving this is finding out if and how the contact with the English language and the Western culture has affected their perception of China and the Chinese culture and, furthermore, their perception of themselves as individuals as well as members of the Chinese society. In addition, the informants' attitudes towards the Western culture and the spreading of the English language are found out in order to discover the relations between their attitudes towards the Chinese and the Western cultures,

and how it all affects the shaping of their cultural identity as Chinese people. The next section introduces the methodological basis for examining all this: ethnography.

## 3.2.    Methodological framework: ethnography

The task of ethnography, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007: 3), "is to investigate some aspect of the lives of the people who are being studied, and this includes finding out how these people view the situations they face, how they regard one another, and also how they see themselves". In this study, the task was to investigate how the participants view the effects of the English language and the Western culture on the Chinese culture and society, as well as how they regard themselves as individuals and as members of the society while influenced by these effects. "Central to traditional ethnographic research is the focus on cultural meanings" (Wolcott 1982, as referred to by Heyl 2001: 369), meaning that the focus is not the phenomenon itself, but how the phenomenon affects the culture and people in question. As further stated by Heyl (2001: 369), ethnographic research techniques owe much to cultural anthropology. The strong link between ethnography and cultural anthropology is emphasized by Blommaert (2006: 9) as well. Although in this study the topic is the effects of a *language* on a certain group of people, the main focus is indeed on the *people* and their culture; through the language the people learning it are affected also by the culture from which the language originates. Hence, it is the effects that one language and culture has on another culture as experiences by a certain group of people that is inspected here, not the ways in which the language is being used. It can be said that the approach of this study is more anthropological than it is linguistic.

Ethnographic research is always mainly qualitative, but can also use the help of quantitative methods (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3). In this study,

although the methods are mostly qualitative, some quantitative analysis is used in analyzing the questionnaire results. The partly quantitative questionnaire was chosen as one of the main sources of information for this study in order to get a larger sampling of the target group than would be possible with just interviews. The main means of doing ethnographic research are interviewing, observing and taking notes; all of which are realized during *fieldwork* (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 3-4; Blommaert 2006: 28-53). In the case of this study, the fieldwork took place in China, in the city of Guangzhou from March to June of 2010. The observing was not very organized or methodical, but happened rather automatically during everyday life. The results of this I have occasionally used to back up certain matters presented in this paper (see for example pages 47, 48 and 108). The interviews of this study were semi-structured (see section 3.3 for further information), and, as a result, the interview tapes often include lengthy bits of free conversation that further helped to elaborate the information given by the participants during the interviews. In the next section the data and the informants of this study are introduced.

## 3.3. Introducing the data and the participants

The research material for this study consists of a questionnaire which was answered by 78 informants, and eight (8) interviews. The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) contained four sections, labeled as follows: 1. Personal information, 2. Language and cultural identity, 3. Cultural identity, 4. Contact information for the interview (optional). The first section was aimed to find out the demographical and sociological background of the respondent, including place of birth, mother tongue, and parents' occupation. The second section probed the language attitudes that the respondent holds, towards both the English and the Chinese language (Mandarin Chinese). Most of the questions in this section were answered simply with either "yes", "no" or "don't know" (or

variations of these three). However, some questions, which I perceived as requiring more elaboration or explanation, had a follow-up question such as "if yes, how?", to which the respondent could answer freely within the space given. In the third section of the questionnaire all the questions were of this fashion (semi-open questions) with both given answer options and an open, more explanatory answer space. For example, for question 3.5, *Compare yourself to your grandparents and parents. Would you say your life is very different from their lives?*, the given answer options were "yes" and "no". In addition to this, there was an explanatory question, "If yes, how?", with an open answer -section. The fourth and last section had a space for the respondent to leave his/her contact information were they willing to take part in an interview concerning the same topics as the questionnaire.

The interview (see Appendix 2) was semi-structured. It consisted of set questions that were altered and/or skipped according to the interviewee's previous answers. In addition, at times there occurred free conversation on different topics during and after the interviews. The interview questions were divided under four themes, all of which emphasize different aspects of the same issue. The themes were: 1. Overall view about the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities, 2. Chinese culture and identity, 3. Western culture(s) and the English language, 4. The relationship and the influences between the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities. The first part aimed to tune the interviewee into considering the concept of cultural identity, keeping the subject on a general, impersonal level. The second part concentrated on the Chinese identity from the interviewee's personal point of view, going through their personal history and changing attitudes. The third part kept the matter on a personal level, but shifted the focus from the Chinese culture and identity to the English language and the Western culture. The fourth and last part of the interview mixed the personal and impersonal levels, forcing the interviewees to think of themselves in relation to and as members of the Chinese people and culture.

The target group of this study consisted of Chinese university students who are majoring in the English language. More particularly the target group consisted of three (3) university level English classes at Guangzhou University in Guangzhou, China. The classes were reached by contacting their teachers. Of the 78 students that answered the questionnaire, only ten (10) were male, while 68 were female. This is directly due to the fact that, as I observed while there, a clear majority of the students majoring in English at the Guangzhou University, are women. Due to this unevenness in the numbers of males and females, the possible effect of the sex is not considered in this study. The age of the respondents was divided between 19 and 23, with almost half (30) being 21 years old. Six of the respondents did not inform their age. Majority of the respondents were originally from Guangzhou, and of the 34 that were from outside Guangzhou, most were still from the same Guangdong province, situated in the south of China, on the coast of South China Sea. The definite majority (62) of the respondents stated their mother tongue as being Cantonese, 25 as being Mandarin Chinese, and four (4) as being something else. The total number of these answers exceeds the amount of the respondents (78), which is explained by the overlapping of mother tongues: many had chosen both Mandarin and Cantonese as their mother tongue. Almost all of the respondents (67) claimed to have no religion, while seven (7) were Buddhist, two (2) Taoist, one (1) Christian and one (1) confessed to an unstated other religion. Due to the fact that, based on their religious beliefs, the informants are a rather homogeneous group, it does not seem relevant to take the few exceptions into consideration. The time of learning English was between 7 and 14 years, but most participants had been learning English between 8 to 12 years.

As can be seen, the target group in this research is a rather specified one; young Chinese university students who are capable of expressing themselves fluently in English, in other words Chinese university students whose major subject is the English language. This is hardly an exhaustive sampling of the huge Chinese population, of which, according to China Demographics Profile 2009, 57% live in the rural areas of the vast country, not to mention below the

poverty line. However, targeting a wider group among the Chinese would not be meaningful in finding out how the English language is affecting the cultural identity of Chinese people, for most Chinese still today have little or no contact with the English language to begin with. In China the general knowledge of English is rather low, despite the ferocious studying (see section 2.1.3). Business and tourism are concentrated on the urban areas; large cities such as Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing and Guangzhou. This would indicate that there are hundreds of millions of people in China who have little if any real contact with the English speaking world. Without the knowledge of the English language and English-speaking cultures, or any contact with them whatsoever, it is doubtful that the English language or English-speaking cultures would play a very important role in shaping these people's identities.

In this context, the target group of this study can be viewed as an important part of China's future; they are young, highly educated and linguistically capable of functioning outside China, in other words promoting their home country in the international arena. One could say that the target group of this study is a sampling that is indeed *relevant* to China. The next section clarifies how, where and when the data presented here was collected.

## 3.4. Methods of data collection

As mentioned above, this is mainly a qualitative study, with some quantitative aspects. The questionnaire is partly quantitative, but the most value is put on the open answer sections, which form the qualitative part of the questionnaire. The research material for this study was gathered during my exchange period in Guangzhou University in Guangzhou, China, mostly during the months of April, May and June of 2010.

The questionnaire was answered by 78 Chinese university students whose major subject is English. No pilot study was conducted due to time limitations.

However, as it turned out, all the filled out questionnaires were usable. The 78 respondents were first- or second-year students in three English classes. The questionnaire was handed out to them either at the beginning or at the end of their English class, and returned to me after one or two days by their teacher. While handing out the questionnaire I emphasized the importance of answering the questions personally and without the help of classmates or friends, in order to keep the answers as genuine as possible. Unfortunately one of the classes had an exam coming, and thus many of the open questions were ignored from their part. Nonetheless, the questionnaires offer plenty of fruitful research material with insights on how the Chinese students experience the role of English in the shaping of their cultural identity. While the questions in the first two sections provide information that is easier and quicker to process, the more in-depth questions of the third part offer interesting views on the modern day life in China.

The interviews were conducted after the questionnaires. After inspecting the answers of the questionnaires I selected the people I wanted to do the interviews with. The selection was based purely on my assessment of whether or not the person had something meaningful to say about the matter at hand – that is, whether they had answered the questions thoroughly, regardless of the contents of the answers. At this stage the questionnaire answers were not analyzed in any detailed way. The interviews took place in my room at the university campus international hotel, and in each case the interviewee and I were the only people present. All the interviews were recorded. One of the interviews was interrupted by a knock on the door, but this seemed not to affect the course of the rest of the interview.

The interview was done with eight (8) people, of whom one (1) was male and seven (7) were female. After the pilot interview I decided it was necessary to let the interviewees go through the questions before beginning the interview. This was to promote their understanding of the questions, and to give them a chance to ask for clarification were there matters they did not understand. However, the problems that occurred during the pilot interview were not

extensive, and therefore did not prevent the use of the interview in the study. The concept of cultural identity puzzled many of the interviewees, which is why I provided them with an explanation based on my own view of the matter. Unfortunately some interviewees still failed to grasp the notion, limiting the differences between the Chinese and the Western people to being merely external (e.g. hair and skin color, eyes, features). This leads us to deliberating the possible hindrances to the reliability and validity of this study, which are discussed in the following section.

## 3.5.    Reliability and validity

With a study dealing with a vast concept such as the cultural identity of the Chinese university students, it is necessary to look into some aspects that might give the reader doubts about the reliability and validity of the study. Due to the varied level of proficiency in English among the target group, some language-based misunderstandings are considered. As I came to realize during my stay at the Guangzhou University, the university level studying of English in China differs in some considerable ways from that of studying it in Finland. The most significant difference to consider, in my opinion, is the fact that in China people majoring in English at university level are actually *learning* the language, while in Finland fluency in English is a prerequisite to even being accepted as an English major. During my stay at Guangzhou University, I encountered a few times the question "why would you study English when you are so good at it?". This, I believe, proves the need for taking into consideration the difficulties which the English language might have caused during the gathering of the research data. Another thing worth mentioning is the fact that I, as a Westerner, was present in the interview situations, which may or may not have affected the interviewees' responses to certain topics.

### 3.5.1. Language Problems

In spite of the target group being university level English language majors, the level of their fluency in English caused some problems in gathering and analyzing the research data. Although the students have studied English language for more or less ten (10) years, many of them had not achieved a high level of fluency in producing or understanding the English language. This resulted in questions and concepts in both the questionnaire and the interviews being misunderstood or misinterpreted.

The first time I realized that there might be some language problems ahead was while handing out the questionnaire forms to the students. Immediately after having the papers in front of them, a large number of the students took out their electronic dictionaries and started translating what they did not understand. It was also quite obvious that even their English teacher was not entirely fluent in English. While giving me instructions on where to find the other groups I was supposed to meet, she struggled considerably when trying to write down the words "administrative building" – and eventually failed. One of the informants did not mention the parents' occupations in the questionnaire because of not understanding the word "occupation" (it was marked with a question mark). Unfortunately it was impossible for me to help the informants to fill out the questionnaire, and therefore it is impossible to say if the answers were partly affected by the informants' language difficulties or different interpretations. As Blommaert (2006: 43) mentions, this is "one of the headaches for questionnaire research: the assumption that the terms used in the questionnaire mean the same things to everyone". This problem can occur while filling out a questionnaire in one's mother tongue, let alone in a foreign language. Adding to this the problems with fluency in the foreign language in question, as in this study, and there is a chance to serious misinterpretations. As far as the answers go, however, there were numerous grammar and spelling errors, but in terms of content there were no obvious cases of misinterpreting the questions.

During the interviews the misunderstandings could be attempted to be corrected, but even then the result was often less than desirable. In the interviews I would usually give up after a couple of failed attempts of clarification, in order to not make the interviewee feel too uncomfortable to continue the interview in a relaxed manner. As already mentioned in section 3.4, 'Methods of data collection', the problems were not so much about the language per se, but about the concept of cultural identity. As an explanation of the term I offered them elaborating questions, such as "what makes you Chinese (other than being born in China)", and "what does it mean for you to be Chinese". After explaining the meaning of the concept it was either understood or not, but, as mentioned, I would not press the matter too much. In addition to this particular problem, surprisingly few language problems occurred during the interviews. Despite some remaining misunderstandings – such as "cultural characteristics" being reduced to mere appearances – I find the answers useful for the study. Although the concept of cultural identity may be falsely interpreted on some informants' part, the answers still offer valuable information about their attitudes and perceptions toward the Chinese and the Western cultures and peoples.

### 3.5.2.  The observer's effect

"*There is always an observer's effect*, and it is essential to realize that: you are never observing an event as if you were not there. You are there, and that makes it a different event" (Blommaert 2006: 27, emphasis in the original). In most ethnographic research the researcher is an outsider, who is changing the authenticity of the situation s/he is studying, merely by being there. Rare are the cases where such a presence would not affect the subjects' behavior and/or expression, and this study was no exception. To be exact, in the case of the interviews conducted for this study my role was not exactly that of an observer, but I find the "observer's effect" nonetheless something worth considering. In a

country such as China, where gaining knowledge and expressing opinions on certain topics (for example politics) is not as free as in the Western world (see section 2.1.2), a discussion of such topics may not be as straight-forward as other topics. Especially in the case of the more political questions of the interview (for example questions 4.1, 4.4), it seems reasonable to take into consideration the possibility of some of the informants embellishing their answers due to the fact that their interviewer was a Westerner. However, some informants did no such thing; one even seemed to accuse me personally, as a representative of the USA, of destroying the Chinese culture. Only after declaring that I am, in fact, *not* an American, nor even a Westerner with any authority, did the informant back down. Even though some informants may have modified their true feelings about some matters in order not to insult me, there is no way of deciding whether this has been the case. All the answers should therefore be treated with the same conviction as the previously mentioned accusation – the sincerity of which I have no intention of doubting. The final section of this chapter discusses the ways in which the informants' answers to both the questionnaire and interview questions were analysed.

## 3.6.    Methods of analyzing the data

This study was performed by using methods triangulation, applying both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The purpose of choosing such an approach instead of purely qualitative methods for this study was more far-reaching nature of quantitative data. By using quantitative methods as well it was possible to gather and analyze more data than with just qualitative methods. Also, using methods triangulation enabled the checking of consistency (Patton 2002: 556) of the interview and the questionnaire answers. The qualitative part of the study, consisting of the interviews and the open answer sections of the questionnaire, were analyzed by using content analysis.

As Patton (2002: 453) explains, "content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings".

In this research the analysis of the data was started with the quantitative part; the statistics of the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire (Personal information) contains the demographical information about the target group, while the second and the third parts (Language and cultural identity, Cultural identity) hold the informants' views about the matters in question. The yes/no and multiple-choice questions were turned into statistics, after which only the in-depth "why" and "how" open questions remained. The answers to these open questions were divided into categories, under which the answers meaningfully fit. Representative examples were then picked from the answers to give the reader as clear a picture of each category as possible. Also some revealing exceptions were chosen as examples to give an idea of the non-mainstream views of some of the informants.

The interview questions were dealt with in a similar fashion. First, they were searched through question by question to find possible mainstream categories of answers and attitudes – similarities, coherence, like-mindedness – and then to find the possible exceptions. Finally representative examples were selected from the answers, to demonstrate both the common answers and the abnormalities. In both the open answer questions of the questionnaire and the interview, the answer categories presented in the results were not preset, but formed according to the answers. Hence, some categories may seem more meaningful than others (such as categories with only one answer), but the categories are formed so as to best include all the answers. However, sometimes an answer was so unclear in its meaning that it could not be labeled under any category except "not clear". These, fortunately, occurred only in a few cases. The next chapter contains the actual analysis of the research data.

# 4.    ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

In this chapter the results of the study are listed and given examples of. The questionnaire consisted of four parts. The questions are discussed from the beginning of the second section in the questionnaire, *Language and cultural identity*, since the first section, *Personal information*, has already been dealt with in section 3.3, the *Data/Participants*. Also question 2.1, *How many years have you studied the English language?*, which actually belongs more to the first section of the questionnaire, has been discussed in the same section. The last part, *Contact information*, on the other hand, was optional, and did not include questions relevant to the study. Second, the interview results are displayed question by question. In both chapters the subsections follow the form of the original question forms (see Appendices 1 and 2).

## 4.1.    The Questionnaire

In this section the results of the two middle parts of the questionnaire are viewed in numerical order. The second part was called *Language and cultural identity*, and it was concentrated on finding out the language attitudes of the informants. The questions dealt with both Mandarin Chinese and English, as well as how the two are related to the Chinese and the Western cultures and the cultural identity of the Chinese people. The third part was labeled only as *Cultural identity*, the questions of which were aimed at finding out attitudes and perspectives of the informants towards the Chinese and the Western cultures. The topic was approached from the aspects of lifestyle, generational gaps and the mixing of the Chinese and the Western cultures. It is worth noting that in the open answer sections given in some questions one answer might fit many categories, and therefore the total amount of answers is occasionally higher

than the actual number of recipients (n=78). The recipients are marked with letters and numbers: F for female, M for male. The female recipients each have a number from 1 to 68, while the ten male recipients are marked with numbers from 1 to 10.

### 4.1.1. Language and cultural identity

The non-demographic part of the questionnaire started off with the informants' assessment of themselves as speakers of the English language in question 2.2, *Would you say that you are a bilingual/multilingual person? (One of the languages you speak fluently being English).* The answer options were simply "yes" and "no". It is not entirely clear if the informants have fully understood the explanation in the brackets, for surprisingly many (36) chose "yes" as their answer. 40 informants answered "no", and two (2) did not answer at all.

To take a closer look on the language attitudes of the informants, it is relevant to view the answers of questions 2.3 through 2.7. These questions were formed to find out the attitudes that the informants had towards the position of both English and Mandarin Chinese in China. All these questions had answer options "yes", "no" and "doesn't matter", and no open answer –section.

| answer/ question | yes | no | doesn't matter |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2.3. | 39 | 21 | 18 |
| 2.4. | 71 | 0 | 7 |
| 2.5. | 35 | 3 | 40 |
| 2.6. | 78 | 0 | 0 |
| 2.7. | 32 | 16 | 30 |

Table 1. Results for questions 2.3.-2.7.

As can be seen from Table 1, the only question that had no deviance at all, was question 2.6, *Do you feel that the Chinese language (Mandarin) is an important part of the Chinese culture?*, to which the unanimous answer of the informants

was "yes". Almost as much agreement was seen in the answers to question number 2.4, *Do you think that all Chinese people should learn Mandarin Chinese?*. To this 71 of the informants answered "yes", while the remaining seven (7) felt that it does not matter. The question that was most disagreed on was number 2.3, *Do you think that everyone who lives in China should speak Mandarin Chinese?* ("everyone" including foreigners and speakers of minority languages – although this was not explained in the questionnaire itself). While half of the informants (39) answered "yes", 21 informants thought it is not necessary, and 18 refrained from taking sides, answering "doesn't matter". The most ambivalence was caused by question number 2.5, *Do you think that Western people living outside China should learn Mandarin Chinese?*, with as much as 40 informants choosing "doesn't matter" as their answer. Almost as much indifference was felt towards question 2.7, *Do you think that all Chinese people should learn the English language?* In this case 30 informants claimed it does not matter. In question 2.5, 35 informants chose "yes", and only three (3) chose "no" as their answer. In 2.7 the "yes" answers reached almost the same popularity with 32 hits, while in this case the "no" option was chosen by as many as 16 informants.

The first questions in the questionnaire that dealt directly with the notion of cultural identity were questions 2.8 and 2.9. The first of these was a question that concerned the Chinese people in general; 2.8 *Do you think that the increasing need for and use of the English language in China has changed the cultural identity of the Chinese people in some way?*, after which the matter was brought to a personal level with question 2.9, *Do you think that learning English language has changed your cultural identity?* For both questions the given answer options were "yes" and "no", which were followed by an open answer section "if yes, how?". As far as the "yes" and "no" answers are concerned, the results were rather interesting. It seems that the informants were more willing to assess the cultural identity of the Chinese people as a whole as changed rather than that of their own; while as many as 49 informants chose the answer "yes" in question 2.8, only 33 chose "yes" in question 2.9. In

correspondence, the "no" answers in question 2.8 amounted up to merely 28, while in 2.9 the figure was 44. In each question one (1) informant did not give an answer.

| answer/ question | yes | no | knowl., comm., & diff. persp. | Western festivals | new ways of thinking | Western lifestyle |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.8.** | 49 | 28 | 14 | 9 | 11 | 9 |
| **2.9.** | 33 | 44 | 12 | 1 | 6 | 4 |

Table 2. Results for given answer options and main open answer categories for
questions 2.8. and 2.9.

Since these two questions are as similar as they are, the answers in the open answer sections were possible to divide mainly under the same categories (see Table 2). The four (4) identical categories were named as follows: "knowledge, communication and new perspectives", "Western festivals", "new ways of thinking", and "Western lifestyle". While the concepts of "new perspectives" and "new ways of thinking" may seem synonymous, they are in fact different. "New perspectives" in this case mean the acknowledgment and realization of the existence of other ways of thinking and of other truths than that of the Chinese people, as well as the ability to use them as tools in order to view things from a new perspective. "New ways of thinking", on the other hand, refers to a more discreet process, in which the recipient's ideas seem to have changed without a conscious effort. Nevertheless, as in many other categories, also in these two there are some overlapping answers.

In both questions the most answers were filed in the category "knowledge, communication and new perspectives"; in 2.8, 14 answers fit the prescription. For one informant, "Language works like a bridge that can make us know other foreign culture" (F38). Many of the informants had similar thoughts about the influence of the Western culture on the Chinese people; one thought the Chinese people "Know more about the culture of Western countries, and change some way we think about" (M6), while another seemed to be stating the inevitable: "We will always encount the western culture, this will bring

different thinking" (F43). One informant was rather eloquent about the encounter of cultures:

> Now the Chinese people's lives are more connected with those who come from other countries. We become more civilized in different cultures and know more knowledge about other countries/languages. (F14)

In question 2.9, 12 answers fit the same category as the previous examples. Some informants mentioned practical, concrete examples of how the English language and the Western culture has affected them:

> Western culture is quite different from our chinese culture. In some extent, I prefer to follow western pattern rather than follow Chinese pattern while I find solution to the problems. (F5)

> I believe in science rather than superstition. I am interested in the Western movies, songs and TV series. I am influenced with the ideas, life styles of the westerners. (F8)

For one, the effect was profound: "It has change the way I think, the way I deal with or communicate with others, the way I study etc." (F15). Another one seemed to enjoy the fact that his English skills set him apart from most of the Chinese people, saying: "People might think I'm from other countries. If I talk English to Chinese people" (M1). Some found clearly deeper, educational levels from learning the English language:

> English has various origins from other languages thus the learning background is diversed. To learn English well, I need to learn how it came into being and in what cultural circumstances and what should I say. (F11)

> By studying English, I absorb many great mind from foreigners. For example, when listening to American president's speech on presidential election, I was inspired that, apart from China, many nations achieved their prosperity on the great minds of their ancestors. So, why no our China attempt to absorb great thoughts aboard, and combine them into our Chinese culture and the make a greater achievement. (F18)

Finally, one informant felt that learning English made her a modern citizen of the world, stating: "Now I can not only talk with Chinese people in my country,

but also communicate with westerners. It seems that I am an international person in the 21ˢᵗ century" (F14).

In the category of "Western festivals" the interesting results continue; in question 2.8 all in all nine (9) informants claimed that Western festivals have affected the cultural identity of the Chinese people. As stated by one informant, "Chinese people will celebrate western holidays because Chinese people know more western culture now." (F1). Of these nine, five (5) mentioned Christmas in particular, two (2) mentioned Valentine's Day, and one (1) Easter; "Chinese may lessen the sense of celebrating our own traditional festival. And they maybe more keen on celebrating the western festivals – Christmas, Valentine's Day" (F3). However, in question 2.9 only one (1) informant confessed to Christmas having had an effect on her own cultural identity, simply mentioning that "Christmas becomes an important festival to me" (F10). No other Western festivals were mentioned.

The rest of the common categories continued the trend of informants making more claims on behalf of the Chinese people as a whole rather than on behalf of themselves. For the category "new ways of thinking" the numbers were 11 (2.8) to 6 (2.9). Some informants felt that the English language affected the cultural identity of the Chinese people (2.8) especially by influencing the young, as stated by these two: "By changing the young's attitude towards life, Chinese traditional customs, etc." (F8), and "many western ideas are influenting most Chinese. For example the idea of freedom, which affects the youngs' way of life" (F22). For one, the most significant influence was not so much the fact that English *is* spoken, but *how* English is spoken: "The way English is spoken, to some extent, stems from and influences the way people speaking English think" (F11). As for the effects of the English language on their own cultural identity (2.9), one simply stated her willingness to consider alternative ways in life: "Compared with Chinese culture, if the western way is better, I will prefer the western one, this could change my mind" (F1).

The category "Western lifestyle" was fitting for nine (9) answers in question 2.8. One of the informants felt that learning English actually drove Chinese people towards the Western culture, stating that "Chinese people tend to lead a life in western culture as to match their using English, such as go to western restaurants or travel aboard" (F18). Another one suspected that the eating habits of the Chinese people are changing: "In Mcdonal's or KFC, affect chise people's taste" (F16). In question 2.9, four (4) answers were filed under the category "Western lifestyle", which for one meant that she "tend to like western movies, accept some western ideas and buy luxuries of famous foreign brands" (F23).

Both the question 2.8 and 2.9 had two (2) separate answer categories. For 2.8 the first one was "Western superstitions" which included one (1) answer: "Belif on some western superstitions, such as walking under a ladder means unfortune" (F4). The other one was "replacement", which had as many as six (6) answers. "Replacement" here refers to a feeling of somewhat forceful replacement of some Chinese cultural traits into Western; infiltration of the Chinese cultural identity. This for the informants meant the sense of ignorance towards both the Chinese culture - "Actually, it is a pity that some students can speak fluently English, however, they know little about Chinese culture" (F5) - as well as the Chinese language:

> The increasing need for English makes more and more people to learn English and the Western word. And the use of the English language sometimes will make people forget their own language in some extent. (F7)

One informant was concerned about losing the traditional Chinese festivals in particular, explaining that "Chinese people, especially the young generation, show very indifference to traditional Chinese festival, but feverish to western holiday" (F20). For question 2.9 the two extra categories were "comparison" (5 informants), and "mutual influence/impact" (2 informants). "Comparison" here means that the informants felt they actively compared the Chinese and the Western cultures in their everyday lives, and felt that thus their cultural identity

had changed: as stated simply by an informant, "Sometimes, I will make a comparison between them" (F36). "Mutual influence/impact" refers to cultural exchange and globalization. One answer in question 2.9 did not fit any of these categories, and its meaning was not clear.

The next two questions were aimed at finding out how learning the English language had affected the informants' attitudes towards both the Chinese and the Western cultures. This topic was dealt in-depth in the interviews and will be discussed later on (see section 4.1.2), but to get an overview of the matter questions 2.10, *Would you say that studying English (language and culture) has changed your opinion about the Western world (culture, people, way of life)?*, and 2.11, *Would you say that studying English (language and culture) has changed your opinion about China (culture, people, way of life)?*, are indeed relevant. Both questions had three (3) answer options and no open answer –section. The answer options were "yes, positively", "yes, negatively", and "no".

| answer/ question | yes, positively | yes, negatively | no |
|---|---|---|---|
| **2.10.** | 71 | 2 | 5 |
| **2.11.** | 39 | 11 | 28 |

Table 3. Results for questions 2.10. and 2.11.

As can be seen in Table 3, the answers to the two questions were (perhaps not surprisingly) quite different. Probably the most predictable results were the statistics in the answer option "no"; only five (5) informants claimed that studying English had not affected their opinion about the Western world (2.10), while 28 informants stated that it had no effect on their opinion about China (2.11). While in both cases the "yes, positively" option was chosen by more informants than the other options, in question 2.10 the number of hits (71) were almost double to those of question 2.11 (39). The most interesting results came up in the "yes, negatively" –section; only two (2) informants felt that learning

English has affected their opinion about the Western world negatively, while as many as 11 informants claimed the same concerning their opinion about China.

The question 2.12, *Do you think that learning English in China today is important?*, acts as a sort of prologue to question 2.13. The question had only two answer options, "yes" and "no", and the dominant opinion of the informants was obvious; the clear majority of 76 informants answered "yes" to the question, while only two (2) claimed that learning English in China is not important.

This kind of attitude is clearly the trend among the Chinese university students who answered the questionnaire for this study. Looking at the question number 2.13, *Do you think that speaking English will affect your future in some ways?*, the overwhelming majority of 77 out of 78 informants answered "yes" to the question. The question was followed by an open answer –section, "if yes, how?". The answers to this question could be divided into the following categories: "career", "studies", "communication", "not clear" and "no answer".

| answer/question | yes | no | career | studies | communication | not clear | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.13.** | 77 | 1 | 50 | 5 | 28 | 2 | 15 |

Table 4. Results for given answer options and open answer categories for question 2.13.

Fifteen (15) informants gave no answer to the question (beyond yes/no), and two answers were unclear. Among the rest 60 answers, as is shown in Table 4, a clear majority of 50 informants mentioned future career as (one of) the effect(s) of speaking English. Some expected it to help them in the competition for jobs: "Maybe I can fin a job easier than others who don't know English" (F30). On the other hand, some found it as leverage to getting into a company of their preference: "If I can speak English fluently, I prefer to work in an international company" (F1). One informant was certain of her future employment, explaining that "Because I am majoring in English and I will surely find a job related to my major in the future. Speaking English will affect my future positively" (F14). Most answers acknowledged English skills as an

asset in the job market, as stated by the following informant: "For hunting jobs, language is very important expecially English, an international language" (F35). Meanwhile, only five (5) informants mentioned the possibility of continuing their studies abroad; "It can help us to further our study abroad" (F25). However, the international aspect of speaking English was the second most popular answer, with 28 informants mentioning communication in some form in their answers. "Communication" in this case consists of communicating with foreigners, travelling abroad and finding information in English. Some recognized the need for English in China, saying that "With the opening policy advances quickly, it becomes more necessary to speak English well" (F29). One informant expressed what seems to be a sincere will to be able to interact with foreigners:

> It will broaden my horizon, and give me more chance to communicate with foreigners, and it also can help me better get to know foreign culture: In addition, learning En can improve my social skill with foreigners. (F24)

In addition to getting to know foreign cultures more thoroughly, it was also acknowledged that one can "Get the first hand resource of information" (F3) with the help of English, as well as "affect my career, my perspective about China and other foreign countries" (F15). For some, English was a tool with which to reach the rest of the world. "English is global language", as one of them mentioned, "It is a powerful device for me to communicate with different people all around the world" (M3). Others continued on the same tracks:

> Since English has become increasingly popular all over the world, acquiring skills of speaking English can be good capital for me to make achievement not only in China, but also in many other foreign countries. I don't need to be restricted in applying for jobs with English. (F18)

> With the ability of speaking English, I will be able to travel many countries more easily. Besides, I might make friends with foreigners and thus learn different culture from them. Last but not least, being able to speak English, I might have more chances to enlarge my knowledge which will be a very important part of my life. (F22)

Some valued most of all the possibility to contact foreign people on a personal level; one informant put it plain and simple, claiming that "It can make me possible to make more friends" (F28), while another thought it was one of the positive things gained by learning English: "I can make friends with foreigners or I can read books in English or something else" (F1). Finally, to sum it all up: "If you want to have a bright future and make huge money, or explore the world, talk English" (M1).

Questions 2.14 through 2.16 concentrated on how the informants represent themselves in an international setting. To start off with question 2.14, *Do you have an English name?*, of the two (2) answer options, "yes" and "no", 75 informants chose "yes", while only three (3) claimed not to have an English name. This question arose from the tendency of Chinese students (and other people who might be in contact with foreigners) to choose an English name for themselves, mostly in order to make remembering their name easier for foreigners. The next question, 2.15 *When you travel outside China, which language/s do you use to communicate there? (check as many as necessary)*, had five (5) different answer options: "Mandarin Chinese", "Cantonese", "English", "other, what?" and "I've never travelled outside China". As the question itself suggests, the answers are overlapping; some informants, even though having checked the option "I've never travelled outside China", chose also one or two languages. All in all 45 informants stated they have never travelled outside China. For 28 informants English was the chosen language while travelling, while 11 chose Mandarin Chinese and four (4) Cantonese. Only one (1) informant chose the option "other, what?", but failed to state the language.

| answer/ question | (Mandarin) Chinese | Cantonese | English | other | never travelled outside China |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2.15.** | 11 | 4 | 28 | 1 | 45 |
| **2.16.** | 13 | x* | 19 | x | 46 |

Table 5. Results for given answer options for questions 2.15. and 2.16.
*x means that this answer option was not possible in this question

Finally, question 2.16, *When travelling, do you use your Chinese name or your English name?*, was aimed to find out about the informants' name use -policies. The answer options were "Chinese", "English" and, as in the previous question, "I've never travelled outside China". This time, a little surprisingly, 46 informants chose the option "I've never travelled outside China" (compare with the previous 45), 19 confessed to using their English name, and 13 claimed to stick to their original Chinese name. To compare the given answer option results for questions 2.15 and 2.16, see Table 5 above.

In the case of question 2.16, the given answer options were followed by an open answer -section "why?", but, perhaps because of the popularity of the last answer option, the answer rate to this question was the lowest in the whole questionnaire (only 29 informants filled this section). Of these 29 informants, 13 stated that the English name was more international: "English name for international use" (F35), to put it plain and simple. For some being international meant making things easier for foreigners: "Because English name is easier to be remembered than Chinese name" (F28), among others. One informant was simply adjusting to the way of the world, stating that "English is still the dominant language around the globe and people abroad know more English than Chinese, generally speaking" (F11). In contrast to those who felt that the English names are easier for others to remember, two (2) informants said the same thing about the Chinese names. It seems reasonable to assume that these informants do not travel much outside East Asian countries, or even outside China; a conclusion that seems to be verified by the two informants stating "Seldom saw foreigners when I travelled" (F2), and "Because many chinese do not understand English" (M6). Five (5) informants chose to use their Chinese name in order to represent China – "Chinese name is a symbol of our country" (F1) – and Chineseness: "I'm Chinese" (F16). Some informants felt very strongly about this:

> Because I was born with my Chinese name, which is my authentic identity. Even though I also like to use my English name, I think my Chinese name makes more sense to myself, because it reflects the love my parents gave me and stands for what they expect me to be. (F18)

> If I have chance to travel outside china, I were still insist on using my Chinese name. Because I am a one hundred percentage Chinese. (F20)

As these examples show, for these two (2) the Chinese name was an important part of their Chinese identity. One (1) informant, who chose the answer option "Chinese", claimed plainly that "It's just a name" (F26). Even those who had chosen the answer option "I've never travelled outside China", sometimes gave an explanation in the open answer section. The content of these answers was best expressed by one informant, who in all honesty acclaimed: "I'm a poor guy!" (M5).

In this section I have gone through the results of the second part of the questionnaire, *Language and cultural identity*. It seems reasonable to conclude that the informants feel that learning the English language has indeed affected their perspectives on both the Western and the Chinese cultures. In addition to gaining more knowledge on the foreign cultures, they have also received new information on their own country. This has led to more diverse perspective on life for others, while for others it has brought with it a renewed love for China, as well as a slight resentment towards the spreading of the Western culture in China. Whereas most of the informants were willing to confess that their attitudes towards the Chinese and the Western cultures have changed due to learning the English language, its effects on their cultural identity was a different thing. They seemed, in fact, more willing to make statements concerning the cultural identity of the Chinese people in general rather than of their own cultural identity. Next the results of the third part of the questionnaire, *Cultural identity*, will be discussed.

### 4.1.2.  Cultural identity

The questions 3.1 through 3.4 in the questionnaire were aimed at finding out the informants' attitudes towards the Chinese and the Western cultures, as well as the mixing of the two. In question 3.1, *What would you say your way of life is?*, with answer options "Chinese", "Western", "other, what?" and "hard to say", a majority of 60 out of 78 informants chose the option "Chinese" (see Table 6 below). Only one (1) claimed to lead a Western lifestyle, while 17 chose either "hard to say" (12 informants) or "other, what?" (5 informants). Two informants did not answer the question. In the follow-up section, "why?", the people who had chosen one of the two indefinite answer options ("hard to say", "other, what?"), mostly offered the same argument; they felt that their way of life was a mixture of the Chinese and the Western (8 informants): "I like chinese culture, as well as western culture, I follow some life style of chinese and some life style of western" (F24). For some (3 informants) it was a matter dependable on the situation, of which specific examples were given:

> As a native, my main way of life is Chinese. I eat Chinese food, talk in Chinese…… But my working style is western. I like simple, direct, efficient, independent. (M4)

> Because I am living in China, surrounded by Chinese most of time. But I adopt some western ways of life as well, such as going out for a drink after work with friends. (F8)

For many (27 informants) the explanation for their chosen answer, "Chinese", was simple enough: "Because my parents are traditional Chinese so I have been living a Chinese life for 21 years. Comparing to Western way of life, I think Chinese way is more suitable to me" (F23). For them their Chinese way of life was just a stated fact, having to do with their upbringing, lifestyle, traditions, and so forth. Family played an important part in this for many, as are shown by the following answer: "Because I live in a traditional Chinese family, my way of life is mostly influenced by my parents" (F15). For others the Chinese

lifestyle was in more concrete things: "I live in China, eat Chinese food and speak Chinese" (F12), and even: "Westerners are not used to taking a nap, but we are" (F3). Interestingly, one informant began to second guess herself, contemplating that "I live in China and everything surrounding is in Chinese style. Yet, something has started to change in some certain aspects" (F11). Unfortunately, the answer did not elaborate on the nature of the change. Five (5) informants claimed that choosing "Chinese" as their lifestyle was simply a matter of familiarity, and that they did not really know much about the Western way of life:

> Even though I've been studying English for 11 years, it's almost impossible for me to have a western life style here. I was borned and live in China. I'm totally a native who has been bringing up in the Chinese culture. Hardly having chance to know any foreigners, I didn't know what is a western life style really. (F22)

Only five (5) informants explained their choice with preference; three (3) prefer the Chinese culture and lifestyle over the Western. Surprisingly, two out of three mentioned the importance of Chinese cuisine: "I am a typical Chinese. I am fond of eating rice. I don't like bread because I am still hungry after eating bread. I am a little bit conservative" (F26). For two (2) informants it was the other way around – they preferred the Western way of life, the reasons for which were listed by one of them: "I prefer that casual way of life. I like the western fashion very much. I would like to buy foreign brand clothes" (F6). One (1) informant chose to explain her answer, "hard to say", with just stating "globalization" (F4).

| answer/question | Chinese | Western | other/equally appealing | hard to say |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3.1.** | 60 | 1 | 5 | 12 |
| **3.2.** | 30 | 16 | 32 | x |

Table 6. Given answer option results for questions 3.1. and 3.2.

The next question, 3.2 *Which culture/way of life do you find more appealing, the Chinese or the Western?*, was focused more directly on the preferences and attitudes of the informants. The answer options were "Chinese", "Western" and "they are equally appealing", which were followed by an open answer section "why?". 30 informants chose Chinese as their preferred culture and way of life, 16 thought Western was more appealing, and 32 felt they were equally appealing. (To compare the given answer option results for questions 3.1 and 3.2, see Table 6 above.) The open answers to question 3.2 proved to be perhaps the most difficult to categorize meaningfully. Even the more common and easily interpretable answers were in the end divided into six (6) categories, on top of which there was to be found three (3) additional categories, all of which ended up having only one (1) answer.

To start off with the more common categories, the most answers (20) fit the label "both have advantages". Some kept it simple, stating, for example, "Because both have special customs" (F45). Others, however, contemplated more deeply on the subject:

> I believe every culture has its acctractive sides. Chinese culture is very profound and worthy to go deep into. Whilst the western culture is open and full of life. Acctually, in my point of view, both cultures are interesting when you get to know them. (F22)

> Culture makes us ethnocentric. But not malice. I love that chinese culture is containable. While Western one, for me, it is fresh and inspired. I love that too. (F2)

> Perfection is hard to find in a single stuff, especially it's as complicated as way of life and culture. There's always something I am proud of in China and something I wish to have abroad. (F11)

The reasons for the appeal of both the Chinese and the Western lifestyle were varied. The Western culture, for example, was a mystery to some, while plain appearance to others:

> I found westernized appealing because I haven't experienced & I am curious about it. And China is a country with long history which has many appealing aspects calling for our attention & study. (F3)

> Both of them are amazing to me. Chinese culture focus more on people's inner nature, and western culture is distinguised by their outside character. (F32)

Those who favored the Chinese culture and way of life mostly kept their answers simple; ten (10) informants stated that they just liked the Chinese way more than the Western: "As a Chinese, I like Chinese culture more than Western's. Sometimes it makes me feel puzzle when I communicate with foreigners because of different culture" (F10). Some expressed this by complimenting the Chinese culture and lifestyle – "Our Chinese culture is very charming" (F17) – while others chose to point out the shortcomings of the Western counterparts: "The pace of western style life is usually too fast" (F29). Another ten (10) were happy with explaining their answer just by stating their Chineseness: "Because I am Chinese. I like it" (F43). One felt that the mentioned fact brought with it a level of responsibility: "I'm a chinese, and China is a powerful country. And it is my repensibility to support chinese culture" (F24). Yet another ten (10) felt that the Chinese culture, history and lifestyle are deeper and more profound than their Western counterparts:

> Chinese culture of life is more appealing because I like Chinese people very much and Chinese culture is excellent and profound. Chinese people is friendly, diligent, ambitious, enthusiastic and have many good characteristics. (F14)

> We have a history of more than 5000 years. (M1)

> Chinese culture is profounded. (F4)

For those who preferred the Western culture and way of life, curiosity towards different lifestyles and cultures seemed to be the biggest motivation (10 informants): "There are a lot of unknown knowledge about western for me" (F39). For some the grass is always greener on the other side, as is shown by these two answers: "Others are more appealing" (F46), and "Very different

from Chinese style, it's attractive for Chinese to learn, fresh, charming" (F35). Eight (8) informants felt that the Western culture and way of life was more humane, free and open than the Chinese. One even stated clear preference by saying: "In my point of view, western life is more appealing. Because it is more free and more interesting than the Chinese life" (F7). Another one took the matter to a political level, stating that "I think some Western political systems are better than Chinese" (F23). For others, as well, there was no question about it: "Because they are more humanity" (M6); "More open and free" (F47). For the rest three (3) answers, one (1) informant mentioned the Chinese sociality and the Western privacy, both as equally appealing:

> Each of them has it's own advantage. Chinese style is bustling with noise and excitement. I can talk and play with my friends happily. And Western style is independent and private. So, I have a quiet environment to think and learn. (M4)

One (1) informant thought the Western world is more modern and advanced, and one (1) claimed to dislike the Western culture and lifestyle plain and simple: "To some extent, I dislike the western culture a bit, maybe I am not well acquianted with western life, even I major in English" (F12).

Question 3.3, *Would you say you are the same as, or different from, most Chinese people?*, had the answer options "the same" and "different", as well as an open answer section "why?". Two (2) informants left the question unanswered, while as many as 61 answered "the same". Only 15 informants found themselves different from most Chinese. For these 15 the most favored explanation (6 informants) was that everyone is different and unique: "Of course, I am different from them, because I am an independent individual in the world, and no one can copy my way of living totally ever and forever" (F18). Three (3) informants claimed that their different ideas were what set them apart from other Chinese. One of them felt misunderstood by other Chinese: "I think I'm not so traditiond in Chinese way. I'm always blamed for that strange idea in

my daily life. People alway don't understand so easily" (F6). Another one confessed to be looking for happiness in a different place than most Chinese:

> I think I'm different from most Chinese people in some way because I've been studying different culture which effects me in a way. For example, most Chinese people think the true happiness for someone is to get married, build/buy a house and give birth to babies. For men, their liability is to earn money to support the families, while for women, to take care of their husbands and children. To me, the true happiness is to have the true freedom. (F22)

For one (1) the biggest difference was not following the Chinese traditions, while two (2) informants felt that simply liking the Western lifestyle and independence was enough to make them stand out from the Chinese crowd: "Just a little different from Chinese people – accept Western culture easily" (F13); "I like independent, private room, western food" (M4).

As for those 61 who answered "the same", the explanations were (rather appropriately) much more homogenic; 29 informants' answers fit the category "Chinese lifestyle", which included behavior, traditions and values among others. One of them saw the similarities including different aspects: "I lead the same life style as most Chinese – Eating the same food; Sharing the same ideas towards family relationship, or marriage, and so on" (F3). Some, however, decided to express the similarity in a compact way, stating simply "I'm the traditional chinese" (F9) or "I behave in the way of chinese" (F49). Some concentrated more on the material side of life – "The life style, is the same, the food, the clothes are the same" (F58) – while some on how people express themselves: "I think I speak, think and behave like most Chinese people in many ways" (F14). Also the Chinese people's mutual love for the Chinese culture was acknowledged, one informant explaining:

> Because I still love my way of living under the atmosphere of good tradition Chinese culture. I like some western culture, but I think our Chinese culture somewhat is still very good. And I think this is what most Chinese people think. (F7)

Being gregarious was the cause of similarity for one informant: "I think I ame the same as most Chinese people as I am normal person. And I'm easy to be influenced by others" (F17). One informant answered "the same", but in her explanation she contradicted her answer using both her education and people's individuality as arguments:

> In fact, it's hard to say whether I am the same as most Chinese people or not. Even though I am a typical Chinese girl, I can tell what are good to me when I am studying English. Actually, each person is different from one anther in this world. (F26)

One felt there was something lacking in the goals of the Chinese people, stating that "Sadly in China, most people have an common thinking that is get good education find a great job, make enough money for the rest of the life" (M5). One (1) informant went as far as to claim that all Chinese are the same: "All chinese are kind and friendly" (F4).

The next question, 3.4 *How do you feel about the mixing of Western customs into the Chinese way of life?*, was aimed directly at the heart of the modern phenomenon of culture mixing. The answer options formed a five-point scale; "very good", "good", "doesn't matter", "bad", and "very bad". They were followed by an open question "why?".

| answer/ question | very good | good | doesn't matter | bad | very bad |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3.4.** | 10 | 49 | 12 | 6 | 0 |

Table 7. Given answer option results for question 3.4.

As can be seen in Table 7, the majority of the informants (49) chose "good" as their answer. For 12 informants the subject was of no concern ("doesn't matter"), ten (10) felt the mixing is "very good", and six (6) that it is "bad". One (1) informant did not answer at all, and no one chose "very bad" as their answer.

In the open answer section the most answers (24 informants) were categorized under "positive cultural exchange". To put it simple, "It is a good way to exchange the cultures between western and china" (F51). The Chinese people can gain many different things by this cultural exchange, as mentioned by several informants: "It makes our life colorful" (M7) and "Mixing brings development and innovation in the positive way" (F32) were mentioned among other aspects. Some felt China can gain by learning:

> Western customs put something new and interesting in Chinese way of life, it makes our country more cultural and Chinese could learn the good aspects of Western culture, like making movies, technology etc. (F14)

Others saw the mixing and cultural exchange simply as a matter of fact, stating for example that "It's a phenomephon of globalization. Meanwhile Chinese custom is being accepted by westerners" (F11), and "It is generally common and inevitable for the mixing of customs when one language insert another, accompanied with mixture of different culture" (F27). Also the positive Western values and habits were acknowledged (11 informants). In some of these cases it was stated quite clearly that the Western way is seen as the better one:

> Often make it pratical (pragmatic). western customs tend to save money, direct and clear. You don't have to sacrifice a lot to save the face and go around the bush to tell a tack brass (fact). (F2)

> We can learn good habits from western customs. Like the manners of behavior in public. That will help us to get rid of the bad habits too. (F22)

Some even seemed to idolize the Western lifestyle to a certain degree, as is shown by these two examples: "There are more attractive things" (F39), and "Enjoy more, know more, live better" (F43). However, some (4 informants) claimed that China was getting mostly the negative Western culture: "Some negative Western culture greatly affect chinese people, especially the young" (F56). Five (5) informants had a fear of losing the Chinese culture. They felt

that the Western culture is learned, especially by the young people, at the expense of the Chinese culture:

> In fact, although mixing of Western customs into the Chinese way of life may be welcomed, I don't feel it's good. That's because more and more people are concerned about the western culture, while they are forgetting our own culture. (F17)

> Since the world is changing, most younger Chinese people are becoming more and more westernized. They eat McDonalds, watch American TV series and enjoy the Christmas. It seems that most of them are more familiar with Christmas than Chinese traditional festivals. The phenomenon of westernization among most of the young in china is what I am worrying about. (F26)

Two (2) even accused the Western countries of outright cultural invasion:

> The mixing of Western customs into the chinese way of life is another way of conquer. They want to destroy our identity, and creat a generation familiar with western culture and support their ideas. (M1)

> some Western governments try to invade Chinese culture by spreading too much thought or imformation of Western countries. (F24)

Two (2) of the answers were not entirely clear in their meaning. One of the informants handled culture as a product, explaining that "Just like a new product comes into being. We study the product, use the product, but not the product uses us" (M2). His chosen answer to the question was "doesn't matter".

The two final questions in the questionnaire dealt with changes between generations. Question 3.5, *Compare yourself to your grandparents and parents. Would you say your life is very different from their lives?*, and 3.6, *Compare yourself to your grandparents and parents. Would you say your cultural identity is different from theirs?*, offer an interesting view of how the young informants think they are different from their elderly. The questions included answer options "yes" and "no", as well as an open answer section "if yes, how?". In both questions the majority of the informants chose the answer option "yes", but in question 3.5 the distinction was clearer; 71 "yes" answers against the 55 in question 3.6. This difference is probably due to the different

nature of the concepts in the questions. The differences between people's lives are easy to pinpoint; they are usually something concrete that is easy to detect, such as money, education or even available luxuries. However, the differences in people's cultural identities may be a case more difficult. One (1) seemed to think that the essential *feeling* or *meaning* of being Chinese has not changed although the society has, and so their cultural identity is the same as that of the previous generations: "We are born to be chinese. The initial identity can never change" (M2).

| answer/ question | yes | no | different values & ideas | different society | lifestyle & traditions | better life | different knowledge |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3.5.** | 71 | 7 | 15 | 12 | 9 | 31 | x |
| **3.6.** | 55 | 23 | 12 | 11 | 6 | x | 9 |

Table 8. Results for given answer options and main open answer categories for questions 3.5. and 3.6.

Nevertheless, the majority of the informants *did* find that both their lives and cultural identities were indeed different than those of their grandparents' and parents'. For question 3.5 the most common (31 informants) explanation for this was an answer that could be categorized under the title "better life". This "better life" consisted of more money, better education, convenience and modernity of life in general. Even a sustainable amount of food was mentioned by many: "I don't have to worry about the essential matter – that's my stomatch matter. I needn't worry about my food, my cloth, or my living condition" (F29). Along with the food, the overall hardness of their parents' lives were acknowledged by several informants:

> First of all, my life is way easier than theirs. They couldn't even have enough food in the old days. And I can have snacks at anytime I want. Moreover, they hardly had/have entertaiments in their lives while I have lots. (F22)

> They used to live a difficult life. If they don't work hard, they would be short of food to survive. And they don't have the chance to go to school. compared to them, I think I am living a much better life. (F8)

Despite of the recognition of the difficulty of life in the old days, only one actually mentioned it having to do with the political system of that time:

> Totally different. In the old days. They didn't even had the necessaries of life. Life was extremely tough there. The imperfect system made them couldn't fully access the education. (F2)

As a counterpart for those who told about the hardships of their elders, many informants concentrated on the positive aspects of their own lives.

> Nowadays we are living a much greater life than they did. As the development of the world, everything has change a lot. Computers, telephones, highways, subway… all this things have make great impact in our life. (M5)

> My life is more colorful than theirs. Because things I enjoy nowadays are richer than the passed. (F23)

The vast opportunities offered to them by life in modern day China were not forgotten: "More opportunity, more freedom, and less constriction" (F19), as one informant listed. Another one stated that "The education is better, the way of thinking is different. life become better (in material)" (F32). Yet another one explained that

> The environment of our lives have changed so much. There are more freedom nowadays. I have more chance to do what I do. And the quality of our lives are getting better and better. (F17)

The many differences between the lives of the young Chinese of today and the lives of their parents were efficiently summarized by one informant, stating simply that "Our lives are modern and global" (M2). In contrast to those who felt that life has become easier, one informant stated that life was actually tougher for her than it had been on her parents and grandparents, due to the pressure that today's society inflicts on people:

> Life is getting more convenient. What I am caring about is different from my previous generations. My generation are affected by the globalization while my grandparents and parents are more conservative. But I must say that my life may be tougher than my parents. I am worrying about my future. (F26)

The second most common answer (15 informants) was that the ideas and values are different for this generation compared to the previous generations: "Our life values are different" (F46), as mentioned by one informant. Others chose to explain the differences further, giving specific examples:

> I have a opener mind and more willing to come up with new thoughts and have a wilder imagination than my seniors, even I tend to take an adventure while parent prefer to stay in the same surroundings in old ways. (F18)

> Our living environment are far away from each other. They seldom accept the western way of life. Our speaking and thinking. For example, my parents would obey to their parents. But I only obey to reasons. (M4)

Also the changes in society were acclaimed (12 informants). Especially technological, cultural and economical changes were mentioned:

> In this modern society, we have more access to all kinds of information via Internet or other media, while the life of my grandparents and parents is so simple. (F12)

As in the previous example, many informants mentioned the life-altering effect of the Internet: "The internet, living condition and the development of our country has made great influence on us" (M3). Gaining access on the Internet was seen as an important continuation to the opening up of China:

> Because at that time, China is not as open as now, I get so many imformation from all over the world by surfing on the internet. but they never. It involves the level of technology development. (F35)

For one informant, the lack of familiarity with modern technology was just one part of the backwardness of his parents and grandparents: "They never know how to operate a computer. They can't talk even Mandarian chinese, but local language. We're more open-minded" (M1). Last but not least, nine (9)

informants mentioned different lifestyle and traditions as one of the most significant differences between the generations. New ideas about marriage, among others, were presented:

> My grandparents and parents may totally live in a traditional Chinese way. For example, they may marry a person who they never see before. However in nowadays, we advocate free love and we will marry our true love. (F7)

The older generations were (expectedly) described as more concerned with Chinese traditions and conventions (as in "Festivals celebration" (F4), as an informant with the answer option "yes" stated). According to the informants, the elderly are not willing to accept the changes happening in modern China, including the Western ideas and lifestyles sometimes adopted by the young. According to some informants, these include among others Western –style independence, a concept rather alien to the elderly Chinese:

> Of course. I live much more happy. I own more. They gave me so much. I can do what I like even sometimes they would score me. However, they'll support me me in slient [silence?]. (F6)

For question 3.6 the categorization of the answers was a bit more difficult. It would seem that the biggest amount of answers (12) fitted the category of "different values and ideas". The different values and ideas had especially to do with the Western world: "Attitude towards the West more positive. Horizon much boarder. Other cultures more acceptable to me" (F27). Attitudes towards other cultures in general were seen as the dividing factor between generations, the reason for which was explained in the following example: "With the influence of other foreign culturals, I have different opinions from them and see things in different perspectives" (F15). One informant felt that the biggest difference was due to the older generations' lack of deeper reflection on life, claiming that

> what the[y] think is much more limitted. They experienced so hard that they spent less time for relax, for thinking why they live. they didn't focus much more on the meaning of life. (F6)

The category with the second most answers was "different age and society" (11 informants). The fact that China has not been as open in the past as it is now, was mentioned as a change relevant to the Chinese people's cultural identity:

> They might consider it hard to fit themselves in innovative thoughts and ways of life in Western style, bevause they were growing up totally in china which at that time, were seldom open to outside world, therefore they fail to accept new things to some extent. (F18)

> My cultural identity combines Chinese culture and Western culture. But at the passed, grandparents and parents just were in a totally Chinese society, so today they are more difficult to accept Western culture than me. (F23)

For some, the differences between the cultural identities of different generations were due to the ignorance of the old and the awareness of the young:

> Great changes has not only taken place at technology, but my point of view about the world and our knowlege. In the period of my grans were young, I think they have no idea what gobalization is. They just care about how to make more money to raise their children but now my eyes are widened. we have the responsibility to promote the development of our country along with the world. (M5)

> We have different education, different experence, so we have different awareness of our cultural identity. (F21)

One even mentioned the more demanding situations in everyday life as the reason for the differences: "Nowadays, we face more complicated situations to the mixing of western culture or customs" (F31). The third most popular category, "different knowledge" (9 informants) links the results with those of question 2.13 (see page 60). It was acknowledged by the informants that their parents and grandparents did not have the opportunity to access and gain information as freely and as variedly as they do – hence, they did not *know* the world, and China, as they do:

In the days of my grandparents, they may be traditional Chinese people, they didn't understand the westeren world, they may thought that their own culture was the best. But nowadays, we study the English language and the Western culture, we can compare it with our own culture and help to develop our own cultural opinion. (F7)

The importance of knowledge was emphasized by several informants, stating for example that "We learn more than they have and know more than them" (F28). One went as far as to present a straight forward claim about the cultural identity of the Chinese people of today: "They may fail to see the good points of other cultures. And nowadays we have the mixed cultural identity" (F3). Finally, six (6) informants agreed, as in question 3.5, that the previous generations are much more conventional and traditional than their generation: "They are more conservative than us. They are very unwilling to accept some new ideas" (F20). The learning of the English language was acknowledged by some of them: "The life of my grandparents and parents is very traditional. they didn't know what the Western cultural is. We had learnt English and Western customer" (F12). Differences in cultural interests were also brought up, one informant telling that "They concern much about the traditional festivals and I don't. The way we talk seems a little bit different" (F22). Only one informant dealt with grandparents and parents separately. Recognizing the differences between different times, but giving credit to the influence of her parents, she told that "Mine is different from my grandparents, but much similar to my parents. It's probably because I am affected by them in a way" (F11).

The results of the third part of the questionnaire given in this section seem to compliment some of the results of the previous section. The informants' attitudes towards the Chinese and the Western cultures are deepened, giving a more profound picture of their perspectives on the Chinese and the Western cultures. For the majority of the informants the Chinese culture and way of life still seems to be the one closest to the heart, but the Western culture also undoubtedly has its appeal. The overall view seems to be that the Western culture is more open and free, but also a little foreign. The Chinese culture and people, however, have clearly changed in the minds of the informants; although

the long history and profound nature of the Chinese culture still evoke affection among the young Chinese, they also acknowledge the huge changes that China has undergone within the last couple of generations. To further find out about the topics dealt with in the questionnaire, the next section contains the results of the interviews.

## 4.2.    The Interview

In this section I will go through the interview results question by question. The subsections follow those of the interview; the interview is divided into four sections, named 1) General views about the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities, 2) Chinese culture and identity, 3) Western culture(s) and the English language, and 4) The relationship and the influences between the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities. The interviewees are marked with letters and numbers; F represents female, while M represents male. The seven female interviewees are separated with numbers from 1 to 7, and the only male is marked with the number 1. The examples from the interviews are transcribed word for word, as spoken by the interviewees. For transcription conventions, see Appendix 3.

The only completely unanimous answer in the interview appeared in the third section, 'Western culture(s) and the English language', where every informant answered "no" when asked the question 3.4, *Have you ever spent time in an English speaking country?* As there were no altering answers and the results can work as background knowledge about the interviewees, this information is more relevant when given here before other results of the interview, rather than dealt with in its numerical place.

### 4.2.1. General views about the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities

The first section of the interview was aimed at finding out what the interviewees' general views about the Chinese and the Western cultures and people are. Only the first question is a personal one, set to tune the interviewees in on the topics of the interview. Later on in the interview the background, reasons and connections behind the answers were asked about in greater detail; in the following sections the topics are handled on a more personal level from different aspects. The first question of the interview was the same for all the interviewees: 1.1 *What does being Chinese mean to you?* Five (5) out of eight (8) informants stated that, for unspecified reasons, they were proud to be Chinese; however, one (1) of these five announced also feeling depressed about the current state of China:

> in the past before I went to college I think being Chinese is kind of, like proud of because, when we're in high school or, like we're very young… that, our teacher our country told us that in the past… we're in the middle of the world and… we have a very long history and… we're the best but… when I came to college… and know that the differences between China and the Western countries… that… they highly developed and, what we are right now I feel, kinda depressed, because… we are not, we were in the past right now. (M1)

One (1) informant brought up the importance of Chinese family values, while for another being Chinese meant being traditional and conservative. In one (1) informant being Chinese evoked the will to contribute to China. The specifics aside, four (4) informants claimed that being Chinese meant, first and foremost, being born and raised in China and living a Chinese lifestyle – "I'm Chinese", as F1 simply put it.

When it came to defining the Chinese cultural identity, there were as many opinions as there were interviewees. For question 1.2, *In your opinion, what does 'Chinese identity' comprise of?*, four (4) informants agreed that different aspects of the Chinese culture – such as traditions, festivals, food – are

the cornerstones of the Chinese identity: "maybe it consist of some… some traditional elements […] we have the traditional festivals, […] we can found our own identity in these festivals" (F2). Both history and globalization/development were mentioned by three (3) informants, the latter not always as a positive thing: "Like, thirty years ago you can tell, that guy is a Chinese but right now, I think, after the globalization, everyone looks the same. […] and I think we kinda lost our cultural identity. Kind of" (M1). Two (2) felt that appreciation of Chineseness was important. Again one (1) informant brought up the strong family values, explaining that

> the Chinese people, has a very, strong concern about family. And, for example, in Chinese, we have to… call our families, relatives, the way we call them are very different, like auntie, in English is just auntie uncle, cousins, and in Chinese we, separate them from, the relative, the relatives of my father's side, and, […] the calling of them is different from… the relatives, of my mother's side. (F4)

One (1) mentioned the conservativeness of the Chinese, and one (1) went as far as claiming that a kind and warm personality was a part of the Chinese identity. One (1) informant felt that the matter of national identity is merely a matter of actual nationality; Chinese identity for the Chinese nationals.

The Western identity did not inspire the interviewees quite as much. When answering question 1.3, *In your opinion, what does the 'Western identity' comprise of?*, the most agreed upon aspect (3 informants) was that the Westerners are more free, independent and open-minded than the Chinese: "it gives me the impression that, they are so free. Especially… they can almost act and speak so free, it's like, without any limitation" (F3). This was, however, contradicted by one (1) informant, claiming that actually the Western are quite conservative and traditional when compared to the Chinese. Two (2) informants subtracted the notion of Western identity as consisting merely external characteristics, followed by one (1) who decided that "the people from the West" (F6) have the Western identity. Finally, one (1) thought that being rich is

an important part of the Western identity, while for another at the bottom of the Western identity is the Westerners' history as conquerors:

> the culture of the China, Chinese people is… like, following the river. […] The Chinese guy is, they don't like fighting. They don't like fighting each other. They just want to, well, try our best and… But the Western people, like in the past… […] they've been… or, what they've been right now is through… what's that word is? Power maybe. […] they come to the Asia and defeat all the country and get their… treasures. And, that's how makes them right now. So they're… […] Looks like they more like fighting. (M1)

In the interview, the joint questions of 1.4, *What do you consider to be the biggest differences between the Chinese and the Western peoples and cultures?* and *Which features do you think are similar?*, were separated for the sake of convenience for both the interviewees and the interviewer. As expected, the interviewees came up with more differences than similarities: nine (9) categories, of which most (6) were brought up by just one (1) informant each. These six (6) categories include "appearance", "religious beliefs", "history" and "living standards", the last of which refers to the Westerners having better living standards than the Chinese. In addition to these four, one (1) informant felt that Chinese people are more open and accepting than the Westerners, and another one (1) claimed that Chinese are peaceful, while the Westerners are conquerors by nature. Half (4) of the interviewees thought that the Westerners are independent, open-minded and free. As an example of this independence one interviewee compared the Chinese and the Western athletes:

> when I was a child, I was heard that, many of the [Western] national athletes, […] most of them are fighting to win or to get awards in the olympic games for example… actually they want to get the award for themselves, and… not many of them will think of, this award is actually more important for their countries than their own person. […] But, um, for Chinese, many of us like to win the awards in the international sports… sporting, and they want to win the games and more for their country. Not only their own person. (F1)

Furthermore, three (3) informants stated that the Chinese are conservative and not independent. As an example of both the Western open-mindedness and the

Chinese conservativeness, two (2) informants mentioned attitudes towards sexuality:

> the most obvious point that, the… sex, sexuality. Well they [the Westerners] tend to be very… open, can I say that? Well if we, if Chinese people… we tend to… do that when we get marriage, or after that. (F3)

> for example, their atti- attitudes to… some new thing… for example, like homosexual. In Chinese, people may be, very… they look down upon, the gays or lesbians. […] I think in Western countries they, have commonly accepted them. (F4)

Similar to the results of question 1.3, also now one (1) informant claimed that, in fact, the Chinese people are more open and accepting than the Westerners, but chose not to elaborate as to why or how. For one (1) the Chinese appeared as a peaceful nation, while the Westerners appeared as conquerors. Finally, two (2) informants thought that the most significant difference between the Chinese and the Western people are their habits.

The similarities of the Chinese and the Western cultures and people were somewhat easier to handle. Two (2) informants stuck with the big picture and stated that we are "all human beings", and another two (2) felt that both the Chinese and the Western are trying to achieve their goals in life. In contrast, one (1) simply asked: "is there anything similar?" (M1). Two (2) informants agreed that both value the family, while one (1) thought both are rather patriotic. For one (1) it was the pursuing of freedom and equality that made the Chinese and the Western similar.

In this section the results of the first part of the interview, 'General views about the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities', have been inspected. It has given an overall view of the interviewees' ideas about the Chinese and the Western people, and about being Chinese. As seen in the results, being Chinese evoked strong feelings in the informants; however, not all of them were positive. As could be expected, the informants had more ideas about what the Chinese people and the Chinese identity are like than they had about the Western counterparts. Nevertheless, one point came across in more than one

question: that the informants think that the Western culture and people are more free and open than the Chinese. All in all, it was easier for the interviewees to come up with differences between the two, than it was to come up with similarities. The results of the next part of the interview, *Chinese culture and identity*, will give a better idea about what the interviewees think about the Chinese culture and people in particular.

### 4.2.2. Chinese culture and identity

The second part of the interview concentrated on the interviewees' attitudes towards the Chinese culture and being Chinese. The idea was to find out their attitudes and perceptions of Chineseness throughout their lives, and how the English language has affected those perceptions; from the time before their first contact with the English language to when they have become university students majoring in English. The main point in this section is, however, not on the English language, but on being Chinese and the Chinese culture. To start off from the beginning, question 2.1 actually consisted of two questions, *Before you knew any English, how did you feel about being Chinese?* and *How much did you know about the outside world and different peoples?*. Since the questions were presented to the interviewees as such, the first of the two questions was, unfortunately, not answered by most. There were all in all three (3) answers that can be regarded as replies to the first question; of these three (3), two (2) informants stated they were fascinated by the Western lifestyle, while one (1) had no sense of Chineseness before learning about other cultures. As for the second question, three (3) informants said that they did not know about the outside world before learning English, while four (4) claimed that they knew a little from television and books.

Question 2.2 was a broad question aimed to figure out if the informants' attitudes towards being Chinese and the Chinese culture had changed during their lives: *Did the meaning of being Chinese change in any way for you while*

*you were growing up?* The informants were divided when answering the question. Two (2) informants claimed there had been no change whatsoever. Two (2) felt they had become more patriotic with age:

> when I'm growing up, […] I will have a stronger feelings of being a Chinese. Because I, as I get more and more knowledge about history of my country and the sorrows, her has experienced, when it was in the wars, being invade by the countries, in other, outside China, then I feel, I feel very proud of being a Chinese. Because, it is, it rebirth from many hardship along history. (F1)

For one (1) it was the other way around, and one (1) was proud to be Chinese regardless of the time and age. For two (2) informants the gaining of knowledge was behind the attitude changes, while for another two (2) the biggest change was the growing will to see the outside world:

> maybe I will give you a specific sample. I, when I was a pupil, I think, people who go… go abroad… they do not love their, their motherland. Yeah, so, that time, I told myself, I will never… go abroad to, further my study, […] because I'm, I'm Chinese, so… I will, always stay in China. But now I… my opinion change, yeah I'm going to… maybe to further my study in… England, after graduate from university. (F6)

Interestingly, one (1) informant felt that, with the growing knowledge and understanding, he had become very aware of the anger and violence of the Chinese people, caused by the inequalities of the modern Chinese society:

> in my childhood, everyone's poor. […] We don't have internet, even no television… and… but now… when you came to college and… and try to after, they say, a thirty-years development [?]… we became rich. But not most of them just very little population, became very rich. And now the, things going from bad to worse, like the price of the house, goes very quickly. And… there's alot of, […] the society of China, and Chinese… right now is like, full of anger, violence, and people, they're not satisfied with their government. So they… express their anger, to the government, through the violence way. And, […] a very large population of the Chinese people… they not satisfied with what they're being right now. So, I think the meaning of the, being a Chinese has totally changed for them. Maybe, they would prefer to have more money and move to, move out to China. And live in a Western countries. (M1)

With question 2.3, *What does being Chinese mean to you now, as a university student?*, the interviewees analyze their attitudes in their current situation in life. Two (2) of them did not answer the question, and three (3) stated clearly that the meaning of being Chinese had indeed changed. The basic Chinese values were brought up once again: one (1) informant emphasized the importance of traditions, while one (1) mentioned the Chinese family values. One (1) also declared herself a patriot. Also some negative feelings were found: one (1) informant felt disappointment towards the Chinese government, explaining that

> as I, in university, I, have study much more than… before. And I… I have known… much more about the… the not so good things, of the Chinese government or, and Chinese, and I, I think… it is, some kind of… […] changing my… view… of, being a Chinese. It's like […] when you know something, bad about other Chinese too, you […] not so proud of being a Chinese as before. (F4)

Another one felt that being Chinese was a restraint of sorts because it can be difficult to get proper travelling documents in order to go abroad. Two (2) informants agreed that being Chinese presented a challenge in the future job markets.

The next question, 2.4 *What do your parents do for a living? Do they speak English?*, acted as background information for both the question 2.5, and for the interviewees' social background. Listing all the occupations of the interviewees' parents' does not seem meaningful. However, it can be said that the mothers' occupations were between a housewife and an engineer, and the fathers' between a retired owner of a small fishing boat and an architect. What is interesting in the results of this question is that seven (7) of all the interviewees informed that their parents do not speak English. For one (1), however, the answer was "of course" (F6). Her mother works as a nurse, and her father, while living, worked as a boss. As she did not elaborate in what kind of a company her father worked as a boss, it is impossible to say whether or not

this would work as an explanation for his English skills. Were it an international company, the answer "of course" could be seen as a justified on his part. Her mother, however, working as a nurse, hardly has an occupation that in China would require foreign language skills. For the sake of comparison, F2's parents are an engineer and an architect, both obviously highly educated, and yet her answer to *Do they speak English?* was, straight forward, "no".

The first part of question 2.5, *Do you think your ideas about the Chinese culture and about being Chinese differ from those of your parents?*, evoked refreshingly similar ideas among the interviewees. However, some of them were not exactly to the point with their answers: four (4) informants answered that their parents do not know/like the Western culture. This was brought up in more detail in question 3.6, to which also four (4) (although not the same ones in every case) informants gave almost the same answer (see page 94 for examples). More to the point were the two (2) informants who felt that their parents are more conservative and traditional than they are. On the other hand, two (2) informants stated that their parents do not understand technology, with the help of which the young people are able to widen their perspectives on both China and the outside world. For M1 this also meant losing the traditional aspects of being Chinese:

> well my parents, they don't believe technology. […] they believe god. So it's like, if a child it was sick, they will ask for, ask help from god. They don't go to see the doctor. And I don't know why. We, we hate all the things but… they do that things to you, even is unacceptable to you. But you have to follow that tradition. But I think… after when we'll growed up, we will… give up that tradition. Yes. And maybe… we're become less and less Chinese. (M1)

Three (3) informants stated that their parents have experienced some tough times in the past, which has affected their current perspectives on China and being Chinese. The informants had, however, different opinions as to what they thought was the outcome of their parents' difficult past:

there is a difference. Especially, the old days my parents… had gone through very hard, tough times. Maybe you can't imagine… […] they told me, every time when I was so happy with the, nowadays living things, well, when we was the age like you are, we… didn't have much food to eat… and, everything is just, you can't take it for granted. It's difficult life. So… in this way, […] the material just didn't […] meet their needs. So what they wanted just to… have enough to eat, to, put on [clothes]. And… living in a, peaceful worl- life, environment, that's enough. They don't want too much, about the in, entertainment or, or else. They won't. But, compared to my generation, they, there, many […] things want to do. (F3)

in… the old society they are very poor, […] they […] haven't even have enough food. To eat, and… […] I think, when they grown up… they still care much about the… […] materials. And, as in our generation, we were brought up in a very […] happy… age. A very peaceful age. So, […] we don't need to, worry about the… materials. […] That's why we… have more time, much time to concern about the spiritual things. (F4)

Interestingly, in the first example, F3 clearly states that, because of the nature of their past, her parents do not care about the material aspects of life. In contrast, F4 claims that it is the other way around for her and her parents; the difficult, poor past has left her parents with a lasting worry about material welfare, while she does not need to concern herself with such matters, but can concentrate on the spiritual side of life.

The previous question was followed by another, *What do you think causes the difference?*, which was asked separately from the interviewees from all except one (F1). Of the remaining seven (7) interviewees to answer the question, two (2) thought that the reason for the different ideas about Chineseness is education (or the lack of it); being educated means getting more information not only of the outside world, but of China as well, as the informant F5 explains:

I think the, that Chinese culture, to them, as what they see is what they know about Chinese culture. But for me, I have the chance, I have the time, to look the books, and then I can learn more about the Chinese p- Chinese culture than them. Such as the customs they don't know where, it's […] their, ancestors, and then, […] pass from one generation to generation. But they don't know why… why such customs goes out, but I've, I know, I can learn more about from the books. I can learn the origins of the customs. (F5)

For three (3) the reason was the changed social environment, including globalization, which once again encountered some dissatisfaction: "well I think it's, mostly, due to the, globalization. Our mind are changed by the worse, Western value. But I hate that. I wanna be a traditional Chinese guy" (M1). Three (3) informants' opinion was that their parents are not interested in the outside world, while the young people want to learn and see the world; two (2) were on the same tracks, criticizing their parents of being too conservative. Finally, one (1) thought it was all about the technology, and the young people's ability to understand and use it.

The results given in this chapter of the second part of the interview, *Chinese culture and identity*, gave a deeper understanding of the interviewees' ideas and feelings about the Chinese culture and about being Chinese. The focus was especially on how their ideas about these have changed throughout their lives, while the influence of the English language has gradually increased as they have gone from zero knowledge to being English majors at the university. The obvious result of this part of the interview was that the interviewees' ideas about being Chinese have indeed changed as they have grown up. For some, gaining more knowledge on both China and the outside world had brought forth a certain level of patriotism; many still felt proud of being Chinese. For others, however, learning about the outside world had given new perspectives on China, as a result of which they felt somewhat disappointed with how things are in China. When asked whether or not the interviewees have different ideas about the Chinese culture than their parents, the results were again clear: yes, they do. In addition to the most obvious reason – that they have grown up in a different time – the informants seemed to think that one of the main reasons for the difference in their ideas is their education. Also the modern technology was seen as an important factor, for it makes it possible to reach information from all over the world. In the next chapter the results of the third part of the interview, *Western culture(s) and the English language*, will give a deeper idea about what the interviewees think about the Western culture.

### 4.2.3. Western culture(s) and the English language

The third section of the interview, *Western culture(s) and the English language*, is a counterpart of sorts for the previous section, *Chinese culture and identity*. Whereas the previous section was about finding out how the interviewees' attitudes towards being Chinese and the Chinese culture have evolved throughout their lives, the section *Western culture(s) and the English language* was about finding out how their attitudes towards the Western world and the English language have changed with time. Except for question 3.4, the results of which were given at the beginning of the Interview –section (see page 80), the results are again given in numerical order.

Question 3.1, once again, consisted of two parts, of which only the first, *Before you were taught any English, did you have some idea about the English speaking, or the Western world?*, was actually presented to the interviewees. The second part, *If so, what was it based on, ie. where had you learned about it?*, was left out because the answer to the first question usually included the answer to the second one as well; four (4) interviewees told they knew a little about the Western world from the television, and three (3) more a little from school (other subjects than English):

> in my childhoods I like to see the […] Western… tv-programs so, I knows much about the, Westerners and… although I don't know what they say I just read the… [subtitles] […] and I, I think the Western is very beautifuls and they are all very fashionable so, I really want to learn English, and learn their cultures. So, I thinks when I grow up I will become more fashionable [laughs]. (F7)

As for the impressions that the informants had of Westerners at that time, two (2) thought they seemed very attractive (see previous example), while two (2) thought they were merely very different. One (1) of the informants claimed to have had no idea whatsoever about the Western world before learning English.

The next question, 3.2 *Do you think that learning English at school gave you a better idea about it (the Western world)?*, was answered "yes" by six (6) interviewees, and "no" by two (2). Three (3) informants stated that the reason for this was the ability to access more information after learning English; two (2) were taught culture at school. On the other hand, two (2) informants felt that the television was still the most important source of information, the reason for which was explained by F2:

> I think, the teachers cannot tell us… tell us their knowledge of, on this part, because they, most of them do not go outside [China], yes to um, know actually how, how this were as, they cannot show us the [unclear word] details, yes, I prefer to see the soap drama. (F2)

Furthermore, one (1) informant stated that "English is just a language" (M1). For one (1) informant learning English brought with it the realization that the Western culture was not as perfect as they had thought.

Question 3.3, *Why did you choose English as your major subject at the university?*, was aimed at finding out the interviewees' motives for studying the English language. One (F1) of them was not asked this question. The answers to this question could be categorized partly as instrumental, partly as others. The most favored answer (4 informants) was definitely instrumental; that English is the international language. Also under the category are the two (2) informants who felt that speaking English might help them to find a good job. As for the less instrumental reasons, success in previous English studies was the motivation for two (2) interviewees. In contrast, one (1) claimed to have no talent in mathematics, and had therefore chosen a field of study with no need for mathematical skills. Surprisingly, one (1) informant swore that he had not wanted to study English, but did not really have a choice:

> I swear to god if I have optional choice I definitely not come to, study English. At my high school, when I was choosing a major… we have six… choose. And my first choose is finance. And the last one […] I didn't choose and I handed my paper to my teacher, and he say no, you gonna fill that, that sixth one. And I say okay, what can I choose? Japanese or English, okay let's

choose English. And I never believe I gonna, come to here study English because… I have no idea about what English is. (M1)

Almost as surprising was one (1) informant's confession about studying English because of Harry Potter:

I see the Harry Potter. [laughs] And then, I think, I want to learn English to see the Harry Potter writ- as written in the English. [laughs] I want to see the original one. So I choose the English as my major and then I [unclear word] maybe the learning processing much interesting. [laughs] (F5)

The main question, *How do you view the Western culture(s) now, as a university student majoring in English?*, of the two in question 3.5, was originally followed by *What about the Chinese culture?*. The follow-up question was, however, dropped, on account of its similarity with question 2.3 (see page 87). Also the main question was not asked from one (F5) informant, and one (1) did not answer although asked. Three (3) informants found the Western culture(s) attractive and interesting. One (1) thought the Western culture is similar to Chinese culture, and one (1) disliked it:

before I learn and study I think I still curious about Western culture, but, after I learn English and I can… watch those movies from, USA British… now I think things turn bad. I dislike the Western country more. I don't know why because… they're try to… […] they are doing bad to China. Yeah, they always say something bad, about China. [Is that more political, or…?] Everything. Everything on the your broadcaster, bad about China. There's very, seldom, reports about China is, while there's good news about China. They always well China is a threat to the world. A threat to the Western countries. (M1)

One (1) informant felt the Western culture is very free and equal compared to China: "I also like the Western cultures because I thinks, the Western cultures… stand for the freedoms and, equalities. But in, but in our cultures I thinks freedom is not, so importance" (F7). For one (1) the Western culture presented itself as very advanced. Interestingly, one (1) claimed still to have no idea about the Western culture(s), even though she could give a specific example of what the Western people are like, as learned from her father:

because I do not… meet the business men so far, so I, I have no idea. Yes, but my father, […] had gone to German and some European countries, and he, he didn't quite understand why… why didn't they… to treat them, to the restaurant […] to have a dinner. Yeah. Because in China, there, if the guest come to our country, […] we will have a dinner with them, in a restaurant, yes but, those German are just having their lunch, with the sandwich. […] It is such very weird to him, he could not accept that, and he think, why the foreigner are so mean. (F2)

Following the pattern of question 2.5, also question 3.6 was a two-question unit. The main question, *Do you think your ideas about the Western culture(s) differ from those of your parents'?*, was followed by *Why do you think that is?*, which was asked separately. As for the main question, one (F7) of the interviewees was not asked, while the remaining seven (7) answered "yes". The majority of four (4) interviewees informed that their parents do not like and/or accept the Western culture. In one case the reason for this was very clear:

when I was in high school and I every Sunday I went to… the, church. And, my mom will say… just, a waste of time, and you should study hard at home, instead of going to a church. […] my mom… doesn't like… Western culture. (F6)

Correspondingly, three (3) stated that young people are more interested and accepting of different cultures. Surprisingly, an example of this was given by the same informant (F2) who in the previous question (see top of this page) claimed to have no idea about the Western culture(s):

as the example I mentioned, my sister and I think, that is the way of life, their way of life, and they, […] most of foreigners just have one hour, for the lunch, and then after one hour, they, [unclear word] work again. […] it's not a, very common for some of the Chinese they still are, get used to the, to the, life with the two hour, for the lunch. Yes, after the lunch they can, […] take a nap. (F2)

Three (3) informants claimed that their parents do not really know much about the Western world or it's culture(s). This does not always mean that the parents have a negative attitude towards the unknown, as shown by F1: "my mother

always says to me and, she envies that I can learn the English and speak fluently it, in English". The follow-up question, *Why do you think that is?*, was not asked of two (F7, M1) interviewees, and one (1) gave no answer. Three (3) informants agreed that the reason was the parents' lack of knowledge, while two (2) simply blamed their fear of different cultures. F2 explains again:

> my sister is thinking about… working in the foreign countries, she wants to go to Australia. Yes, and then she wants to apply for the job [t]here. And then, my parents, objects to her idea, and think that, it may be too difficult for a girl to, make a living there, because the cultural surrounding is so different. Yeah, and… […] my father will [unclear word] as an example that you cannot take a nap after lunch and then you cannot have a good rice, and then the foreigners […] may be… not as… hospitable as the Chinese people, yeah… they think. Yes, so, a girl may be very lonely to live there, yeah. (F2)

Two (2) mentioned the difference springing just from the fact that their parents have been brought up in a different time.

The next question, 3.7, was also divided into two parts that were asked separately. The main question, *Do you think that nowadays there is a pressure for learning English in China?*, evoked seven (7) straight "yes"-answers. Three (3) interviewees felt that there is a lot of competition in China when it comes to learning English. As F7 states, "I think if you want to find good jobs in China you must speak, […] excellent English and, just like a native speaker. So, is a very, great pressure in Chinas". The compulsory English proficiency test was mentioned as an indicator of the pressure, as demonstrated by F4:

> yes, a very huge pressure. And, I, as you can see, […] in every college and university, and… not just… student like us, who majoring in English, but, those who, who are majoring in others… subjects, they also have to pass the… English test, […] they have to pass level four to, to get their… university… certificate. Yeah, there is a primus [?]. […] if they can't pass the… this test, […] they might not to get their certificate. (F4)

As many as five (5) informants agreed that the level of English is bad regardless the fact that everyone is learning it. F6 recognizes this in herself, claiming that "I learn English for maybe eight years, yeah, but… I cannot,

speak, very fluently". F7 expands her critique to English majors in general: "although you are majors in English your English is not so, very perfect compare with other students". Deriving from this, three (3) informants declared that there are some problems with the Chinese education system. M1 was especially concerned about this:

> they even put, a very large, of the, resource… […] for our English education. And, they don't even care about, what those students, how they learn Chinese. They even can talk, very bad Chinese, write very bad, but you can talk English? Well that's good! Everyone see you as a good person. A good student. So I think, well, it's very bad. […] it doesn't come out with a good result. There, there's lots of college students they learn English for more than, like three years, six years, and after their graduation they talk very poor English. Just like me. […] But I, I don't know. Our education, system has some problem. It needs, we really have to change it right now. (M1)

The second part of the question, *Do you think that pressure has somehow affected the Chinese culture and/or the cultural identity of the Chinese people?*, was not as agreed upon as its predecessor. One (F1) interviewee was not asked this question. The majority of five (5) informants answered "yes", while one (1) thought there was "no essential change", and one (1) could only say "possibly". Three (3) informants mentioned the popularity of Western festivals, and two (2) had noticed some level of ignorance towards the Chinese culture. Once again, M1 had his piece to say about the matter:

> because when, more and more person, they learn English… they, know more about the Western. And they kind of, oh let's celebrate, Christmas, and they love Christmas. And I was curious, what Christmas about us? […] I don't know, they kind of, fascinate with the Western culture right now. So I think our country just did a very stupid mistake. […] they think, if all the Chinese guy they can talk English… well China can cooperate with the world better, but it turns out like we… cultivate a generation they… fascinate with the Western country, but they talk poor English. I think that's the very bad result, of that. […] they think Christmas is very important. […] And the girls want their boyfriend to buy present for them, and celebrate the Christmas in the Western way. […] That's very strange. Just like, we're giving up our tradition to celebrate the Western tradition. And the Western still celebrating their own tradition. Do you think that's… acceptable? Just like, China is less China, the Western is still Western. (M1)

Three (3) informants felt that the pressure to learn English was forcing people to change and to learn new things.

In this chapter the results of the third part of the interview, *Western culture(s) and the English language*, clarified what the interviewees thought about the Western world. The questions in many parts followed the pattern of the previous part, *Chinese culture and identity*, with some additional questions. As in the previous part, the results showed that the ideas about the Western world had changed with the learning of English; furthermore, once again some interviewee's felt the Western world became even more intriguing, while others began to question or even dislike it. Some were afraid that the Western culture will at some point finally replace the Chinese culture. This was also a concern when talking about learning the English language in China. Most of the interviewees stated strongly that there is a pressure to learn English in China nowadays, and many felt that learning English was emphasized by the education system at the expense of other subjects – even the Chinese language and culture. However, the importance of the English language was also recognized by the informants, and many believed to be improving their position in the job market by studying English. When asked about the differences between attitudes of different generations, all the informants agreed that the difference is notable. Many claimed that the older generations do not know much about the outside world; many stated that whether or not their parents know about the Western culture, they do not like or accept it. The reasons for this were listed as lack of knowledge/education, fear of foreign cultures and differences in the societies in which different generations have been living. To further elaborate the interviewees' ideas about the changes that have taken place in the Chinese society under the influence of the English language, as well as the relationship between the Chinese and the Western cultures, the results of the last part of the interview are given in the next chapter.

## 4.2.4.     The relationship and the influences between the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities

While in the previous two parts of the interview the interviewees were asked to consider the Chinese and the Western world separately, the last part made them think about the Chinese and the Western worlds' cooperation and mutual influences. First they were to reflect on the current world situation with question 4.1, *In your own words, how would you describe the relationship between China and the Western world?* In this question as well as in the case of 4.4 (see page 101), it is perhaps necessary to consider the possibility of the interviewer – or the interviewer's nationality to be specific – affecting the nature of the answers. As is shown later on, most of the informants described the relationship between China and the Western world in a rather positive tone. Whether or not this is their actual perception of the matter is impossible to detect, but the possibility of their true opinions being altered in order to not offend the interviewer, must be acknowledged (for further deliberation, see section 3.5.2). This stated, the results are now analyzed as they are.

One (M1) of the interviewees was not asked this question, and of the remaining seven (7) the majority of five (5) felt that the relationship is cooperative, especially in the fields of economy and trade. Furthermore, four (4) informants found the relationship friendly and peaceful, and two (2) thought that the Chinese and the Western worlds teach each other. As for the less positive attitudes, one (1) informant claimed that the two take advantage of each other, while one (1) felt that the relationship is a competitive one. One (1) interviewee mentioned the Western world's tendency to criticize China:

> I think there is a very interesting ph- phenomenons. The, USA or Western, countries, always thing that… always criticize, the… Chinese politics. And they always said… we don't have, the… independence, in China. We don't have democracy. Which I think is, in some circumstances, is true. (F4)

As can be detected from the end, the notion of the Western world criticizing China is presented in a rather neutral light, as if she thought that the critique is not entirely unjust.

Question 4.2, *Do you think the Chinese culture has somehow changed due to the increasing contact between China and the Western world?*, was originally followed by question *How would you describe the change?*, but the latter was not presented to the interviewees on account of the answer to the first part mostly included also that information. One (1) of the interviewees did not answer the question, and of the rest seven (7) all answered "yes". As many as six (6) informants felt that the Western lifestyle (including food, clothing, festivals etc.) is spreading in China. Especially the spreading of Western fast food raised opinions:

> You can see alot of McDonald KFC outside. […] obviously our diet, our way to eat is… […] one of the most healthy… way, healthy meals in the world. But after we, the globalization [laughs]… then, lot of junk, junkie food, just come over. And, at first we will think it's delicious while it's different, […] but later, we think […] it can kill people. Brings out alot of diabetes, [looks for the word] obesity! Yeah, […] it's kind of a big impact, to change some people's way to eat. And this change is gonna… last. For a long time. (F3)

On the other hand, two (2) informants claimed that China has received advanced technology and ideas from the West. Two (2) mentioned that China is opening up, and three (3) felt that the change is due to learning and accepting the Western culture. Two (2) informants had noticed that some everyday customs of the Chinese are changing, F6 giving a specific example:

> maybe before thousands of years ago… Chinese… they, when they say goodbye to… each other, they will say zai jian, or, [Chinese phrase], but […] nowadays, almost everyone, will say bye bye. Yeah, that's a, very obvious change. (F6)

Although the affect of the English language on the Chinese culture was not brought up in itself by any of the informants, this last example by F6 can be

seen as an indication of its actual effect, changing the way people use language in everyday situations.

The next question took the matter back to the personal level; 4.3 *Do you feel that your own identity as a Chinese person has somehow changed under the influence of the English language?* Depending on the course of each interview, three (F3, F4, M1) interviewees were not asked this question; three (3) answered "yes" and two (2) "no". Gaining knowledge on both China and the Western world had given new perspectives for two (2) informants. For F5 this meant help in everyday problems:

> before I learn the English, I have […] no chance to know the, […] foreigners' minds. And know their […] logic to think about, think about the problems, and I just, I just can… sort the problems […] in a Chinese thought. Then, after I learn the, English, […] I have more knowledge, and sort the same problem in different aspects. (F5)

For F1, on the other hand, it meant a long process of shifting loyalty and appreciation, and realizing that things are not necessarily as black and white as they at first might seem:

> when I was in the grade four in primary school, then I began to learn English, and, everything about the English was interesting to me… I and I even think that English is the most fascinating language in the world, […] I make every effort to learn it well, and I also appreciate every, the Western culture at that time, because all of them… are new to me, and I have never experienced it. I, I were not told, before. So, […] I can say I even, ignored the Chinese to some extent, at that time, because English… is very fascinating. But, as […] more informations is given to me, and, I began to realize, I can not only absorb the many new, […] and excellent, events and excellent ideas about the Western people… but I also know somethings, […] bad things. I mean, they influence me in a bad way, such as the violence that happened in Americans. And, such as the… womans like to have the babies before the marriage, so […] many American mothers, like to, give birth to their babies, but without husband. So, at that time I began to realize that […] even though the Westerners, who can speak their fascinating English, but they are also have, the good things and bad things, on them. And […] I began to, set my ideas, about the Western cultures, apart. […] like the [culture?] have two sides." (F1)

One (1) declared to be more open-minded, while two (2) had gained more understanding and love for China. Surprisingly, one (1) mentioned Christian values as having affected her identity (F6, see example on page 94), whereas for one (1) English was just an equipment to see the world. One (1) recognized a certain change in her everyday habits, apparently caused by the influence of the English language.

Question 4.4, *Where do you think the relationship between China and the Western world is going?*, was sort of a follow-up question for 4.1. Three (F2, F3, F7) interviewees were not asked the question, and one (1) gave no answer. Two (2) predicted that China and the Western world will continue their cooperation, and similarly two (2) thought they would be "friends with advantages". One (1) felt that the West will continue criticizing China, at least as far as the politics go:

> in the political way… they think we behave really bad. And they take it as a, excuse, to force China to, do more things, to share more responsibility. And they always think well, China… thin- seems, your economy is developing so fast. You shouldn't call, call yourself as a developing world. You should… Well, they prefer to call us a developed, country. And share more responsibility. (M1)

On the other hand, for another (1) the future meant China becoming more and more free. Finally, one (1) foresaw that, while it will be difficult, in the end all cultures will mix together.

Question 4.5, *Do you think that globalization and internationalization are positive or negative things for the Chinese culture and people?*, ended up being the last question of the interview. Originally it was supposed to be 4.6, *Have globalization and internationalization affected your identity as a Chinese person in any way?*, but in the end it felt that the question had already been answered by the interviewees. As for question 4.5, four (4) informants answered "positive", one (1) "negative", two (2) "both", and one (1) stated that globalization and internationalization are simply "inevitable" (M1). Four (4) interviewees mentioned mutual learning and influence, which was not seen

simply as a positive thing (although that as well), as can be detected in the specific example given by F1:

> because the Chinese, will be influenced by the English… in the pronunciation, […] in the ways of expression. But I don't think is a, [threat], but maybe some people… think so. Because… some pronunciations and the ways of expressions maybe, integrate with the Chinese words. […] and then the people especially the teenagers, like to combine the English into the Chinese. And so, the language, […] maybe it influenced. And, […] they're not spoke in their traditional way. (F1)

A similar effect was mentioned by F6, who gave an even more specific example in question 4.2 (see page 99). The positive aspects included the idea of China getting stronger, which was mentioned by two (2) informants. On the negative side, however, three (3) informants felt that China is paying more than it is getting. Once again, M1 was the one to share his thoughts on the matter most eagerly:

> they always say that China benefits the most, during the process of globalization. […] but, I think China… pay more… than what China get, in the globalization. And, well, what we see right now, the prosperous economy, and, the, dramatic developments, to economy. But, the matter, is that, how long can we last for this. Maybe, I think, no more than twenty years, we gonna face some p- really serious problem. (M1)

Also this question brought up one (1) informant's concern about the Chinese ignoring the Chinese culture. In this context also the before mentioned (question 3.7; see page 95) critique towards the Chinese education system surfaced again:

> I think is a negative things. Because as I mentiones before, many Chinese people pay great attention on the Western histories and Western cultures, but they just ignore our own cultures. The teacher always say English is very important but, they won't… emphasize that Chinese is very important for the students. The, […] educational system… […] has a problems now. But, I thinks, in the future, maybe […] we will pay, attentions to our cultures again. (F7)

In this chapter the results of the last part of the interview, *The relationship and the influences between the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities*, showed how the interviewees think about the influences of the Western culture on the Chinese culture and people. For the more political questions the informants' answers were mostly rather diplomatic, although some dissatisfaction with the Western countries was presented. In the questions about the cultural aspects of the countries' influence on each other, the opinions varied quite much. The majority of the informants seemed to think that the influence of the Western world on China was a positive thing; however, the most eager opinions were about the Western culture replacing the Chinese culture. Even those who claimed to have a positive view about the matter often mentioned examples that had to do with the gradual replacement of their culture. Some mentioned the use of the English language in everyday life as well, for example the phrase "bye bye" instead of the Chinese equivalents. However, there was also to be detected some anticipation for further opening of the Chinese society and politics; in the end the globalization was seen mostly as a force that can, after all, improve life in China.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In this chapter I will discuss the results of the questionnaire and interviews. From the results I have picked the main themes that came up in both the questionnaires and the interviews. It would not be meaningful to go through the questions again in the given order as in the previous section, for the answers for different questions are often repeated, and the results of some questions are overlapping and complementary to others. Although the conclusions drawn from the results are my own, I present among them theories by Edwards (1985) and Hall (1992, 2002), which I find relevant for backing up my own

interpretations of the results. I have divided the discussion into three different sections. The first one, titled 'Language attitudes', discusses the attitudes of the informants towards the English language, and the role of English learning in their lives. The second section is called 'The idea of the Chinese nation and of the self', and it deals with the informants' perceptions of themselves in relation to the Chinese nation, and how they feel about both while constantly gaining new information about the outside world as well as China. The third section, 'Perspectives on the Chinese and the Western cultures', discusses the changing attitudes of the informants towards both the Chinese and the Western cultures.

## 5.1. Language attitudes

Having now inspected all the results of the study, both the questionnaires and the interviews, it can easily be concluded that the perspectives and attitudes of the informants have been strongly affected by their knowledge of the English language. It seems that as they have learned more and more English, the amount of information available to them has steadily increased. This has granted them the opportunity to learn more not only about the outside world, but also about China. Before delving deeper into the results of this, a discussion about the language attitudes of the informants is in order.

As mentioned in chapter 2.1.3, China nowadays has the largest English learning population in the world. From an early age children are pushed by their parents towards learning English, for English can be the key to the child's success. Such pressure towards learning English has lead to a highly mechanical, test-based evaluation of progress in language learning. This kind of attitude towards English language, which comes across clearly also in the questionnaire and interview answers, is what Edwards (1985: 146) calls "positive and instrumental", as opposed to "favorable and integrative" (see page 23). In China the pressure in the school system stems from the ferocious

competition in the job markets, and success is measured merely in grades; this has lead to a whole system of mechanical learning with little or no chance of integration. The English language is seen as an instrument towards a better future; better jobs, more money, possibly moving abroad. The instrumental attitude towards the English language was demonstrated by the informants of this study when answering a question that dealt with the expected effects of learning English on their lives (question 2.13 in the questionnaire). The results were clearly future-oriented; 50 out of 60 informants who answered the open answer -section of the question, thought of learning English as a means to get a good job and career in the future. Similar future-oriented results were reported by Gao et al. (2005) in their study about the effects of the English language on the self-identity of Chinese undergraduates (see pages 34-35). Gao et al. (2005: 50) state that "learners' perception of their own *competence* was the part of identity affected most by English learning" (emphasis added). They go on explaining that the students who had experienced such increase of competence demonstrated "positive attitudes towards life, *pursuit of social positions* and fulfillment of *individual potentials*" (Xu 1999 as cited by Gao et al. 2005: 50; emphasis added). Although the study by Gao et al. has a different approach to the subject than this study, the results would suggest that in both cases the research subjects considered the English language as a means to achieve something in their lives, thus possessing an instrumental attitude towards the language.

In China, proficiency in English is an asset in itself. It seems reasonable to think that this is due to the general level of English in China, which, in the case of even the educated Chinese, is often poor to say the least (see chapter 2.1.3). Also, the lack of language integration was noted by the informants, especially in the interviews. In a question regarding the pressure for learning English in China (question 3.7 in the interview), the Chinese education system was heavily criticized for emphasizing the learning of the English language at the expense of other subjects, including the Chinese culture and languages. Also the results of this on the Chinese students' English level were criticized. As M1 stated, in

China there is growing up a generation that "fascinate with the Western country, but they talk poor English".

This kind of resistance towards the value set of the Chinese education system where the importance of the English language seems overemphasized was seen also in the questionnaire answers. What is interesting to notice is the amount of "yes"-answers in the questions 2.5 (should people in Western countries learn Mandarin Chinese) and 2.7 (should all Chinese people learn English). Surprisingly, actually *more* people think that Western people outside China should learn Mandarin Chinese, than that the Chinese people should learn English. Also, the objection in question 2.7 is more than *five times* the objection in question 2.5. It seems worth considering whether this could be interpreted as some sort of resistance towards the rule of the English language in the world. At least it seems to underline the previous notion of the general attitude towards English in China being more "positive and instrumental" than "favorable and integrative". English is being learned because it is the main means of international communication, but beyond that it holds no special position. Indeed, "necessity may overpower attitude", as Edwards (1985: 146) mentions, and explains that "most historical changes in language-use owe much more to socioeconomic and political pressure than they do to attitudes *per se*" (emphasis in the original). In the case of China the "socioeconomic and political pressure" to learn English and thus promote international cooperation have grown immensely ever since the opening up of the country, after which China was launched on the path of rapid growth in both economy and political importance.

The pressure to learn English in China was seen by the informants as one aspect of – or even as one of the reasons for - a larger problem: the gradual replacement of the Chinese culture by the Western culture. This concern was brought up by several informants in both the questionnaire and the interviews (for instance, question 3.4 in the questionnaire; questions 3.7 and 4.2 in the interview). They were concerned that, while the Western lifestyle and values seemed increasingly appealing to especially the young Chinese, these young

people were at the same time becoming more and more ignorant towards the traditional Chinese culture. It seems that in their language attitudes the participants of this study demonstrate what I would call strengthening of one's cultural identity through resistance. In such a case a phenomenon that begun as a form of globalization, such as the spreading of the English language, actually ends up reviving and enforcing the people's national and cultural identities, their sense of belonging to a certain group and culture.

In this section the attitudes of the informants towards the English language were discussed. As it is obvious that there is a huge pressure to learn English in China, the attitudes towards it are mostly instrumental: learning English is seen mostly as a necessity, something with which to cope better in the globalizing world. English proficiency is seen as a great asset in the job market, and is emphasized accordingly in the schooling system. This has started to evoke some criticism among the informants of this study. While they themselves are English majors at university level, they have become worried about the emphasis that is put on learning and teaching English at schools. It seems the more children in China study English, the less they know about their own culture and language. Also the overall poor level of English in China in spite of its ferocious studying gave pause to many. Some even suggested that the school system should be changed. Whether or not this will happen remains to be seen. However, it seems that changes are indeed what the Chinese society is undergoing. In the next section the changes in the Chinese national as well as individual representations are discussed.

## 5.2. The idea of the Chinese nation and of the self

In both the questionnaires and the interviews it became apparent that learning English has not only brought forward language skills, but also some level of cultural knowledge and understanding. This knowledge and understanding

extends further than only the English speaking world, or even the Western world. For some informants, the most revelatory information gained was about their own home country, China. Hall (1992: 292-293) has written about "the idea of a nation", by which a nation represents and identifies itself: the stories and the memories of the nation that link the people of the present with the past. In a country such as China, where the nation is ruled by a one-party government without democracy, the idea of the nation is largely handed down to the people instead of being created by the people (see sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). It seems that the Chinese people are not encouraged to question authorities, China's history, or the truths that the government sees appropriate to be passed onto them. This was demonstrated, unwittingly, by a Chinese university student (female; one of the informants, but outside the questionnaire or the interview), when she told that what is special about China compared to other countries, is that China has always been bullied by others, but has itself never acted as the bully (see also page 17, Grasso et al.). As it turned out, she was completely unaware of the history of China as a conqueror and an oppressor, including, for example, the case of Tibet.

As a foreigner and, more importantly, a Westerner, one subject struck me with its absence when the informants were asked about the older generations: the Cultural Revolution. A few of the informants mentioned the hardships that their grandparents and parents have experienced in their past, but no one actually used the name Cultural Revolution. The reality of this time period in China's history is very much a taboo in China nowadays. Mao Zedong is still celebrated as a national hero and liberator of the Chinese people, while the devastation and persecution of his rule are being muted down (see section 2.1.2). They are topics that people do not speak of (as are the massacre of Tiananmen, Tibet, and human rights issues in general) – whether it is more because of fear or simply ignorance, it is hard to say (during my stay in China I encountered both).

However, as China is more and more involved in international cooperation and interaction, the Chinese people are getting more and more

channels and sources to reach the untold, other truths. Indeed, learning a new language, such as English, is one of those channels. As the results (see page 60) derived from the before mentioned question concerning the effects of learning English (2.13 in the questionnaire) show, this aspect of learning English is highly valued. Furthermore, as can be detected from the interviews, viewing one's own country from a new perspective may be, as well as a positive experience, also rather unsettling. Additionally, the results (see page 59) of questions concerning the changes in the informants' attitudes towards the Chinese and the Western cultures (questions 2.10 and 2.11 in the questionnaire) can be seen as proof of some level of unraveling of the official idea of the Chinese nation.

The informants of this study belong to a generation that has an important part in making China an economically and politically equal counterpart of the Western world. In order for this to happen, the young and educated Chinese must become internationally equipped. This means, whether the Chinese government likes it or not, gaining more and more information and knowledge about international relations, what is affecting them, and why. It seems inevitable that the more educated the Chinese people become, the less the government will be able to keep the different truths from them. In this study many informants reported feelings of disappointment towards the Chinese government or the system after learning about it things that were previously kept from them. This was demonstrated, for example, in some of the answers in questions dealing with the effects of learning English on the cultural attitudes of the informants as well as on the Chinese culture itself (questions 2.3 and 3.7 in the interview). This sort of awareness that is entirely due to education is most likely to spread among the educated Chinese. Perhaps with time, as the number of highly educated people in China increase, the idea of the Chinese nation among the Chinese people will change to include the history of China more as it is known by the rest of the world, and not as the Chinese government wants it to be told.

In the case of China such a change would be immense, not only from the perspective of the state, but of the ordinary people as well. As demonstrated before by an example (see page 108), most Chinese people grow up believing that China has always been "bullied" by others, but that China itself has never done anything wrong, so to speak. Because of the propaganda (see section 2.1.2), the Chinese cultural identity is built and based on the assumption that China is a "good" country that is tried to be oppressed by the "bad" countries, but that they will not succeed because of the unity and goodness of the Chinese people. To severe this belief is to severe the Chinese people's cultural identity. As the interview results showed, for many of the participants the dissolving of illusions about China meant having to redefine what it is to be Chinese: they had to redefine their cultural identities as Chinese people (see, for example, page 87).

While the young Chinese might be experiencing a change in how the Chinese people see themselves as a nation, also a change on a more personal level seems to be occurring. In section 2.2 I have looked at the notion of the self, and how the self is related to society. As mentioned, in China the self is usually subordinate to the society. Furthermore, traditionally the self is subordinate also to the parents, to family, to employer, to school, and so forth. However, the concept of the self that is characteristic to the Chinese society is now cautiously being questioned by the young Chinese whose world views and way of thinking are being influenced by the Western cultures. The questioning has not yet grown loud or compelling and opinions are not yet fully settled, but it is obvious that something has been stirred in the mindscapes of the young, educated Chinese. It seems that especially the idea of freedom and independence fascinates the young Chinese. In China it is a custom that people obey their parents, no matter how young or old the children are. It is not unheard of that parents even today (at least try to) arrange the marriages of their offspring in order to get the most suitable son- or daughter-in-law.

The unquestioned obeying of parents has started to cause slight rebellion among the young Chinese. In this study this became clear in several different

informants' answers (especially in questions 3.5 and 3.6 in the questionnaire, and 2.5 and 3.6 in the interview). It is clear that family values are still strong in the minds of the informants, but the overall authority of the parents is cautiously tested. Informant M1 of the interview explained that, although he and his brother have to obey their parents even if it makes no sense, he will not force his children to do as he has been forced to do: "That's old tradition. It's unacceptable to us. And I would not do that to my son. I'm not gonna do that to my son. But I still have to, stand what my parents teach me." The differences between younger and older generations were credited to being caused mostly by the development of China since their parents' early lives. The lack of their parents' education and their inability to gain as much information as the younger do were seen as the basis of their traditional lifestyle. The informants themselves, however, have been able to gain information in both Chinese and English due to their education and their knowledge of the modern technologies. Thus they have learned the ways of the world, so to speak: foreign lifestyles, different cultures, and different ways of dealing with things. Most importantly, perhaps, they have learned that the Chinese way is not the only way, and in some cases not even the best way. For their parents these revelations seem to have come too late if ever, and so they are still holding on to their traditional Chinese lives, as many of the informants claimed.

To return once again to the notion of the self, it would seem that the sense of self and independence are indeed some of the things that are changing in the Chinese youth. The informants of this study might in fact be at a breaking point of sorts of the Chinese selfhood, experiencing a change in how the Chinese people experience their individuality, their sense of the self. They have been raised in the traditional way because of their parents' traditional views, but they have been able to find out about different ways on their own. Perhaps, as M1 already suggested, they will raise their children in a different manner, thus promoting new levels of independence among new generations of Chinese people. Whether this is a good thing considering the population of almost 1,5 billion, is yet another matter. Good or bad, by questioning the subordinate

position of the self and the individual in Chinese society, the young Chinese are actually shaking one of the cores of the Chinese cultural identity. As was seen in the results of the questionnaire and the interviews, the strong family values were emphasized by many of the participants. However, also the fascination towards the Western-style independence was mentioned by many. This could be interpreted as them being part of an educated generation that still has been brought up with the strong sense of hierarchy and family orientedness imbedded in their sense of Chineseness, but that might already change that in raising the next generation. Perhaps the cultural identity of the Chinese people is indeed becoming less group-oriented through people such as the subjects of this study.

In this section the changes that seem to be taking place in the Chinese society were discussed based on the results of the questionnaire and interview answers. The idea of the Chinese nation, as was suggested in this section, is gradually changing as the Chinese people, by learning the English language, are able to get more and more information on both the outside world and of China. Changes seem to be taking place on an individual level as well: the Western-style notions of independence and personal freedom are spreading among the young, educated Chinese, who are in some ways caught between the traditional and the modern Chinas. The informants themselves seemed most aware of these changes when talking about the differences between their and their parents' and grandparents' generations. It could be said that their perception of life is more concentrated on their own self, while their parents still live in a traditional Chinese way, the needs of the family overpowering in importance any need of an individual. The changing attitudes of the informants on both the Chinese and the Western cultures are discussed more in the next section, as well as their perceptions on globalization and its effects on China.

## 5.3.    Perspectives on the Chinese and the Western cultures

Although it seems clear that there are some changes taking place in the Chinese society, not all the effects of learning the English language is about change. In fact, for many of the informants of this study, learning the English language and about the Western world and culture(s) actually evoked a desire to return to their traditional Chinese heritage and embrace the Chinese culture. Some reported that they had gone from idolizing the Western world and way of life to a whole new appreciation of the Chinese culture. With new knowledge they had also gained new perspectives on both the Western and the Chinese cultures, as a result of which they had found the profound nature of the latter. Experiences such as these were mentioned for example in questions dealing with the cultural preferences of the informants (3.2 and 3.4 in the questionnaire), and questions dealing with changes in both the personal attitudes of the informants, and the Chinese culture (2.2 and 3.7 in the interview). Some had conflicting emotions about the mixing of cultures: while they were perhaps intrigued by the Western culture and lifestyle, at the same time they felt sad and worried about the gradual diminishing of the traditional Chinese culture. For one interviewee (M1) the conflict was even greater: while he felt compelled not to follow some traditions his parents were still exercising, he also felt that by giving them up he would also give up a part of his Chineseness. There seems to be a battle between reason and emotion for some, reason telling them not to follow certain unpleasant traditions (such as marriage arrangements), and emotion telling that those traditions are what makes them Chinese. Once again, such confusion and contradiction forces people to redefine what it means to be Chinese: what their cultural identity as Chinese people consists of.

Learning the English language and the Western culture has developed among the informants some mixed feelings towards China. However, the same has happened in their attitudes towards the Western world as well. The perception of the Western world in China could be described through categories presented by Hall (2002: 122): "Idealisoiminen. / Halua ja halveksuntaa

koskevien fantasioiden heijastaminen kohteisiin. / Kyvyttömyys tunnistaa ja kunnioittaa eroa. / Taipumus katsoa kaikkea eurooppalaisten kategorioiden ja normien lävitse ja nähdä erot läntisten havainto- ja esitysmuotojen välityksellä."[1] Although these categories were formed by Hall to describe the historical perspectives of Europeans in America, they fit quite well in the situation in China nowadays.

As can be seen in the answers given in this study, there is quite a lot of idolizing and idealizing of the Western lifestyle and culture among the young Chinese. Some aspects of the Western lifestyle are both desired and feared, sometimes even loathed: for example the often mentioned Western freedom and independence at the same time intrigue and repel the informants. They yearn to have more freedom and independence, but at the same time they are puzzled by the lack of strong family bonds or of the free sexual relations among the Western people. Many mentioned the strong family values as one of the most important aspects of the Chinese culture and lifestyle.

The third category, the incapability of identifying and respecting the difference, in China most probably comes from lack of perspective. Although education and learning English have undoubtedly given the informants of this study new perspectives, it is mostly still not enough to fully appreciate the differences between China and the Western world. The reason for this is evident in the answers to questions concerning the traveling history and habits of the informants (questions 2.15 and 2.16 in the questionnaire, question 3.4 in the interview): the majority of the informants have never travelled outside China, not to mention the Western world. For those who seemed to idolize the Western life style it meant mostly the large issues, such as freedom, independence and better living conditions. However, those who were more apprehensive towards the Western lifestyle were also more familiar with the

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[1] "Idealizing. / Projecting of fantasies of desire and loathing on the subjects. / Incapability of recognizing and respecting difference. / Tendency to view everything through European categories and norms, and to perceive differences through Western standards." (Translation from Finnish to English by me; unfortunately I was unable to find the article in the original language.)

smaller, everyday aspects of the Western life, such as the differences in the napping habits of the Westerners and the Chinese, or the fact that the Westerners do not eat much rice. On the other hand, those who were most against the Western world also concentrated mostly on larger issues, such as politics or history.

This brings us to the last of Hall's categories, the tendency to view things through Western norms and standards (see also Wolff 2010: 53). At this stage this comes across mostly in the politics between China and the Western world (the latter trying to pressure China to accept and obey the Western-style human rights among others), and that is how the matter was viewed most strongly in the questionnaire and interviews as well. It was commented in a rather political and negative manner, for example in a question aimed to find out how the informants feel about the mixing of the Chinese and the Western cultures (question 3.4 in the questionnaire), and questions concerning the relationship between China and the Western world and the effects of globalization on China (questions 4.1, 4.4 and 4.5 in the interview). However, the tendency to view things through Western values can be detected also in the more subtle answers. As mentioned before, many informants brought up the Western freedom, independence and democracy (as understood in the Western world) in a very positive light, seemingly viewing them as something to pursue in China as well. These are not traditionally Chinese values, which would implicate that the young Chinese are indeed already viewing their own country and culture partly through Western values.

In finding out if and how the English language has affected the cultural identity of the Chinese university students, globalization was an important aspect to consider. It seems that usually globalization is considered to be making people more similar (see section 2.2), in the future finally ending up with everyone being a citizen of the world more than that of any particular country. However, when going through the results of this study, it became evident that this is not always the case. As a matter of fact, many of the informants actually felt that the globalization has made them more patriotic and

more interested in the traditional Chinese culture and way of life, strengthening their cultural identities as Chinese people. Of course this was not the case for everyone. As can be expected, some thrived on the idea of China becoming more westernized – and, to think about it, surprisingly few mentioned anything about the development working also the other way around. It seemed to be a common idea that the Western life equaled better life: more advanced technology, more money, better living conditions, better education, and so forth. Nevertheless, as mentioned before, globalization gave pause to many. Even those of the informants who seemed happy to mix the Chinese and the Western lifestyles in their own lives, became apprehensive when asked whether globalization was a positive or a negative thing for China (question 4.5 in the interview). While many felt that getting more familiar with the Western world and with the English language was a positive thing for them personally, there was a strong concern about the effects of the English language and the Western culture on China as a whole. In the end, the overall opinion seemed to be, that while globalization was clearly making China stronger in the economic and political arena, in the field of culture the Western world was pulling the longer straw. All in all the informants appeared to be very aware of the changes taking place in China. As a result they seemed to have become a group that was at the same time open to the rest of the world, as well as promoting the Chinese culture.

In this section the informants' attitudes and perceptions on the Chinese and the Western cultures were discussed. Despite their fascination and approval of the Western culture, it would seem that the Chinese culture still prevails as the one closest to their hearts. This is sometimes seen as a resistance towards the spreading of Western culture, while for others the change is more a matter of inevitability; instead of fighting it they simply expressed their regret for the gradual diminishing of the traditional Chinese way of life. As explained with the help of Hall's theory, the attitudes towards the Western world and culture in China are varied, ranging from idolizing to loathing. All the categories presented by Hall were also found in the questionnaire and interview answers

given by the informants of this study. It seems that with the help of the increasing presence of the English language, the Western values are slowly but surely infiltrating the Chinese society through its educated youth. This came across also in the informants' answers concerning the effects of globalization on China. Although many felt that China was the one giving up its cultural characteristics while the Western world was culturally colonizing it, globalization was still seen mainly as a positive thing, making life better in China. Perhaps this could be seen as a sign of the Chinese government getting its way: technological and economical development weighing more than the Chinese culture, not just for them but for the future of China as well – for the young, educated Chinese.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of this study I will briefly review what was done and why, as well as reflect on how successful the study was. Finally, I will present some suggestions for further research. Due to China's growing importance in the international, especially economical, arena, inspecting how the rapid changes affect the Chinese society is highly relevant. This study was performed in order to find out how the English language has affected the cultural identity of the Chinese university students who are majoring in English. To accomplish this, three classes of English majors (n=78) from Guangzhou University filled out a questionnaire, after which eight (8) of them participated in an additional interview. In analyzing the data methods triangulation was used. The questionnaire was partly quantitative, but all in all the study was mainly qualitative. The study was based on ethnography, including some field observation as well.

The results of the study clearly show contradictory attitudes towards the spreading of the English language in China. A large part of the dissatisfaction expressed by the participants was due to the inevitable spreading of Western cultures in China, as well as the over-emphasized position of the English language in the Chinese schooling system. The general idea seemed to be that the emphasis on learning English in school was leaving other subjects, such as the Chinese language (Mandarin), unattended to. The ferocious studying of English in order to pass compulsory tests was deemed by the participants as unproductive, and mostly resulting in a poor language capability. This kind of learning for grades can be called instrumental learning (Edwards 1985). Also the participants' perceptions towards the English language were mainly instrumental, a clear majority of them regarding English as a means to a good job in the future.

To many of the informants the English language played also an important part in getting information. As it turned out, being able to access information in another language besides Chinese gave them whole new views not only on the outside world, but on China as well. Many reported feelings of disappointment after having learnt negative things about China. However, learning new things also brought forth stronger feelings of patriotism. This was often presented as resentment towards the Western world for constantly criticizing China for its different values. Nevertheless, these values were also questioned by many. While learning more about the Western cultures, many of the participants had become more and more intrigued by the Western ideals of independence and freedom, which they felt are lacking in China. It seems that whether their perception of China grew more positive or more negative, they had to adjust it to match the new information they had learned. For many this meant a kind of reinventing of their cultural identity as Chinese people – what it meant for them to be a part of the Chinese nation, as well as what it meant to be a Chinese individual.

When discussing the spreading of the English language in China it is impossible to separate it from the spreading of the Western culture. While the

participants of this study felt that Westernizing equaled better living conditions and more advanced technology, they also expressed regret for the gradual diminishing of the traditional Chinese culture. Although the overall view on the matter of globalization seemed to be, as expressed by one of the informants (M1), that China was getting less Chinese while Western was still Western, it was also acknowledged that some traditional Chinese ways simply have no room in today's modern, global China. In a way, one might say that they are struggling with defining their cultural identities as modern, global Chinese, while still trying to hold on to the legacy of the traditional Chinese culture.

As far as the results of the study go, I find that this research served its purpose. The questionnaire and interview answers clearly demonstrate the contradictory feelings that the Chinese university students are harboring towards the English language and the Western culture, and how they are trying to redefine their cultural identities accordingly. The research material consisting of the questionnaire and the interview offered plenty of fruitful data to work with, and for a study of this level I find the size of the sampling sufficient. I would have preferred to have the gender division more even, but since the results were not analyzed based on gender differences, it did not affect the outcome of the study.

To contemplate more on the research methods used, in retrospect I think that the field observation should have been conducted a bit less randomly. This would have made the study more ethnographical, and the results of the observation could have played a more important part of the analysis. As for the construction of the questionnaire form, I find most of the questions relevant for the study. I am also happy with the different perspectives that the questions concentrate on, as well as the large amount of open answer sections. Considering the given answer options, however, I think that more compatible options could have been given in order to make the analyzing of the results easier. The interview, in my opinion, managed to cover the subject both from the personal as well as the general point of view. However, in some of the questions the change of view was so minor that some of the informants became

frustrated with repeating such similar answers. Although all the questions seemed relevant while composing them, in the actual interview situation they did not always work as planned. Luckily this became evident in the pilot interview, after which I followed the question form less systematically.

One thing that I regret in the execution of both the questionnaire and the interviews is not offering a sufficient explanation of the term *cultural identity*. This is something that I definitely need to pay more attention to in the future: making sure that the informants understand the key terms of the study. In this study the confusion regarding cultural identity, especially in the interviews, may have made it more difficult for the informants to answer certain questions. This could have been at least partly prevented by forming beforehand a comprehensive explanation of the term, which then could have been given to each informant as such. As it was, my random explanations given only when asked for were, at best, insufficient. This is a matter I have contemplated on in section 3.5.1.

I would suggest that further studies put more emphasis on the cultural and societal aspects of the spreading of the English language in China. The English language learning and teaching seems to be the most widely covered area of this subject, and indeed it is an area worth studying – especially in order to develop the ELT in China. However, the Chinese people are such a huge and versatile nation, and globalization and Westernization are hitting China with such a force that ignoring the cultural and societal aspects could prove to be devastating. China and Chineseness are undergoing great changes, and with them one of the oldest cultures in the world is being reshaped, alongside the Chinese people's cultural identities. I for one would be more than happy to continue studying the effects of the English language and the Western culture, globalization and Westernization on the Chinese culture and people. Whether the Chinese culture remains, perishes, or adapts, remains to be seen – and studied.

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**APPENDIX 1: The questionnaire**

**1.        PERSONAL INFORMATION**

**1.1.  Sex**                        male              ＿＿＿
                                     female            ＿＿＿

**1.2.  Age**                                          ＿＿＿＿

**1.3.  Place of birth**             Guangzhou         ＿＿＿
                                     Other, what?      ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.4.  Mother tongue**              Mandarin Chinese  ＿＿＿
                                     Cantonese         ＿＿＿
                                     Other, what?      ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.5.  What other languages do you speak?**           ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.6.  Religious views**            Christianity      ＿＿＿
                                     Buddhism          ＿＿＿
                                     Taoism            ＿＿＿
                                     Islam             ＿＿＿
                                     No religion       ＿＿＿
                                     Other, what?      ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.7.  Previous education**         ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.8.  Father's occupation**        ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.9.  Mother's occupation**        ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

**1.10 . Do other members of your family than you speak English?**
                                     Yes, who?         ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                                       ＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
                                     No                ＿＿＿

## 2.     LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

**2.1.   How many years have you studied the English language?     _____**

**2.2.   Would you say that you are a bilingual/multilingual person? (One of the languages you speak fluently being English)**

Yes                    ____
No                     ____

**2.3.   Do you think that everyone who lives in China should speak Mandarin Chinese?**                    Yes                    ____

No                     ____
Doesn´t matter         ____

**2.4.   Do you think that all Chinese people should learn Mandarin Chinese?**

Yes                    ____
No                     ____
Doesn´t matter         ____

**2.5.   Do you think that Western people living outside China should learn Mandarin Chinese?**                    Yes                    ____

No                     ____
Doesn´t matter         ____

**2.6.   Do you feel that the Chinese language (Mandarin) is an important part of the Chinese culture?**                    Yes                    ____

No                     ____
Don´t know             ____

**2.7.   Do you think that all Chinese people should learn the English language?**

Yes                    ____
No                     ____
Doesn´t matter         ____

**2.8.   Do you think that the increasing need for and use of the English language in China has changed the cultural identity of the Chinese people in some way?**

Yes                    ____
No                     ____

**If yes, how?**

_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____

**2.9.  Do you think that learning English language has affected your cultural identity?**                    Yes              ____
                                                                                   No               ____

        **If yes, how?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**2.10. Would you say that studying English (language and culture) has changed your opinion about the Western world (culture, people, way of life)?**
Yes, positively         ____
Yes, negatively        ____
No                            ____

**2.11. Would you say that studying English (language and culture) has changed your opinion about China (culture, people, language, way of life)?**
Yes, positively         ____
Yes, negatively        ____
No                            ____

**2.12. Do you think that learning English in China today is important?**
Yes              ____
No               ____

**2.13. Do you think that speaking English will affect your future in some ways?**
Yes              ____
No               ____

        **If yes, how?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**2.14. Do you have an English name?**         Yes              ____
                                                                   No               ____

**2.15. When you travel outside China, which language/s do you use to communicate there? (check as many as necessary)**

|  |  |
|---|---|
| Mandarin Chinese | ____ |
| Cantonese | ____ |
| English | ____ |
| Other, what? | _____ |
| I've never travelled outside China | ____ |

**2.16. When travelling, do you use your Chinese name or your English name?**

|  |  |
|---|---|
| Chinese | ____ |
| English | ____ |
| I've never travelled outside China | ____ |

**Why?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## 3. CULTURAL IDENTITY

**3.1. What would you say your way of life is?**

|  |  |
|---|---|
| Chinese | ____ |
| Western | ____ |
| Other, what? | _____ |
| Hard to say | ____ |

**Why?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**3.2. Which culture/way of life do you find more appealing, the Chinese or the Western?**

|  |  |
|---|---|
| Chinese | ____ |
| Western | ____ |
| They are equally appealing | ____ |

**Why?**

_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____

**3.3.  Would you say you are the same as, or different from, most Chinese people?**

|  | The same | ____ |
|  | Different | ____ |

**Why?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**3.4.  How do you feel about the mixing of Western customs into the Chinese way of life?**

|  | Very good | ____ |
|  | Good | ____ |
|  | Doesn´t matter | ____ |
|  | Bad | ____ |
|  | Very bad | ____ |

**Why?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**3.5.  Compare yourself to your grandparents and parents. Would you say your life is very different from their lives?**

|  | Yes | ____ |
|  | No | ____ |

**If yes, how?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

**3.6.  Compare yourself to your grandparents and parents. Would you say your cultural identity is different from theirs?**

|  | Yes | ____ |
|  | No | ____ |

**If yes, how?**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

## 4. CONTACT INFORMATION FOR THE INTERVIEW (OPTIONAL)

**4.1. Would you be willing to take part in an interview regarding the matter of Chinese cultural identity?**
 Yes ____
 No ____

**If yes, please leave your contact information:**
 Name _____
 Email _____
 Phone _____

## APPENDIX 2: The interview

### 1. General views about the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities

**1.1.** What does being Chinese mean to you?

**1.2.** In your opinion, what does 'Chinese identity' comprise of?

**1.3.** In your opinion, what does 'Western identity' comprise of?

**1.4.** What do you consider to be the biggest differences between the Chinese and the Western peoples and cultures? Which features do you think are similar?

### 2. Chinese culture and identity

**2.1.** Before you knew any English, how did you feel about being Chinese? How much did you know about the outside world and different peoples?

**2.2.** Did the meaning of being Chinese change in any way for you while you were growing up?

**2.3.** What does being Chinese mean to you now, as a university student?

**2.4.** What do your parents do for a living? Do they speak English?

**2.5.** Do you think your ideas about the Chinese culture and about Chineseness differ from those of your parents? What do you think causes the difference?

## 3. Western culture(s) and the English language

**3.1.** Before you were taught any English, did you have some idea about the English speaking, or the Western world? If so, what was it based on, ie. where had you learned about it?

**3.2.** Do you feel that learning English at school gave you a better idea about it (the Western world)?

**3.3.** Why did you choose English as your major subject at the university?

**3.4.** Have you ever spent time in an English speaking country?

**3.5.** How do you view the Western culture(s) now, as a university student majoring in English? What about the Chinese culture?

**3.6.** Do you think your ideas about the Western culture(s) differ from those of your parents? Why do you think that is?

**3.7.** Do you think that nowadays there is a pressure for learning English in China? Do you think that pressure has somehow affected the Chinese culture and/or the cultural identity of the Chinese people?

## 4. The relationship and the influences between the Chinese and the Western cultures and identities

**4.1.** In your own words, how would you describe the relationship between China and the Western world?

**4.2.** Do you think the Chinese culture has somehow changed due to increasing contact between China and the Western world? How would you describe the change?

**4.3.** Do you feel that your own identity as a Chinese person has somehow changed under the influence of the English language?

**4.4.** Where do you think the relationship between China and the Western world is going?

**4.5.** Do you find the globalization and internationalization to be positive or negative things for the Chinese culture and people?

**4.6.** Have globalization and internationalization affected your identity as a Chinese person in any way?

## APPENDIX 3: Transcription conventions for the interviews

The analysis of the interviews was not based on the linguistic aspects of the speech but on its contents. That is why, in order to make the contents easier for the reader to follow, the transcribed parts are presented as pieces of text with complete sentences, capital letters and full stops when possible. Unnecessary repetition as well as sounds such as "mm", and "um" are removed from the transcriptions. Other remarks in the transcriptions are to be interpreted as follows:

| symbol | explanation |
| --- | --- |
| ... | pause |
| […] | part of the text removed (e.g. repetition, sounds, tentative clauses) |
| [   ] | comment (e.g. laughter, unclear word) |
| ph- | unfinished word |